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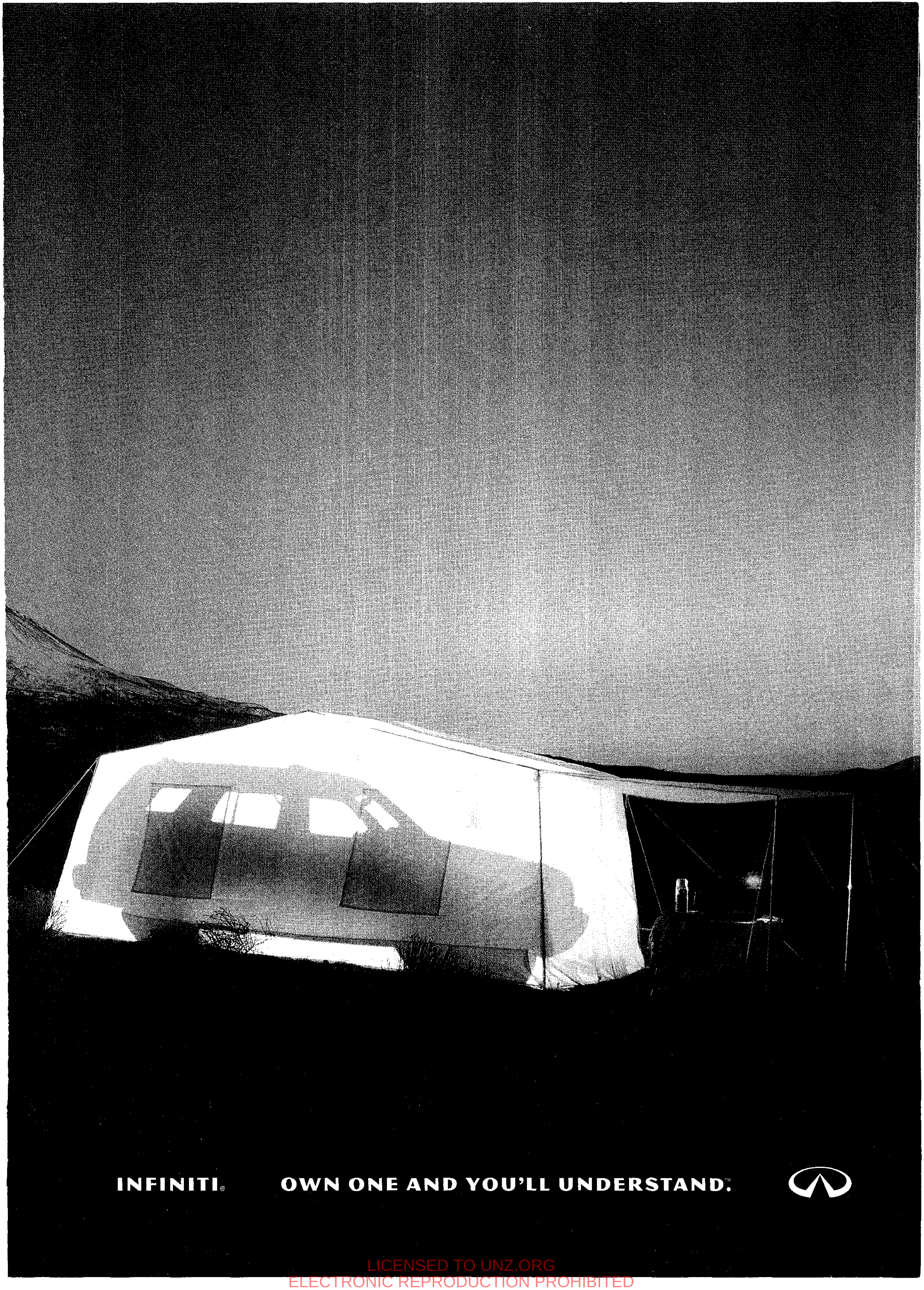
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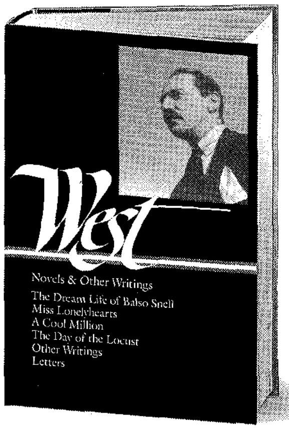

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THE NEW YORKER

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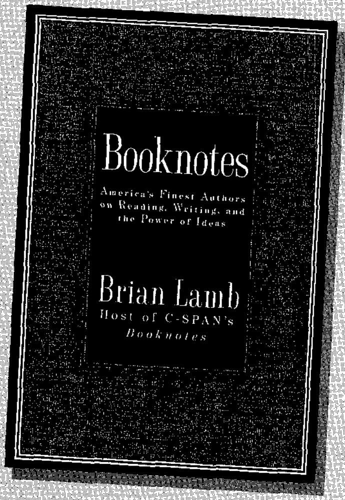
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COMMENT

AMERICAN GOTHIC

What rushes into the newsless void?

"HERO PETS!" went a typical cover headline in *Animals* this summer. (Actually, it was in *People*, but these distinctions are not what they used to be.) Meanwhile, over on the network news, anchors opened with the latest on diet pills. (Taken in moderation, apparently, they're fairly safe.) On July 15th, the lead story in the *Times* concerned some rather modest fluctuations in the value of the dollar against the mark and the franc. *Time,* on its cover that week, featured the artist currently known as Jewel, whose musical message was said to be "Empathy is in." Empathy? It was sympathy that was needed—sympathy for the armies of editors and producers who had to wring news out of what seemed to be turning into an embarrassingly newsless society. Never has the journalistic maw yawned wider, what with a half-dozen all-news television networks, hundreds of other broadcast operations, print outlets by the thousand, and the multimillion-tentacled Internet—and never, it seemed, had there been less to fill it with.

Then, on July 15th, the very day that the *Times* was trying to make do with a few cents on the dollar, along came the story of the murder of the fashion designer Gianni Versace, with the principal suspect a young and personable apparent multiple murderer named Andrew Cunanan. Europeans sometimes say that, to judge from what they read in the papers and see on television, the United States is composed entirely of celebrities and serial killers—an impression the Versace story will do little to dispel. This picture of contemporary American society is not, to be sure, an accurate one. We also have suburban teen-agers who give birth in bathroom stalls during senior proms, allegedly dispose of their infants in the trash, and return for a final dance. We have Manhattan private-school kids accused of eviscerating acquaintances in Central Park. And, of course, we have the family of JonBenet Ramsey.

In short, the public narrative of our lives seems increasingly dominated by grotesque and exotic deaths, the more inexplicable the better. (No wonder Fred Thompson looks so grumpy.) There is considerable irony in this. For several years, all over the country, crime has been plummeting. At current rates, Manhattan will have fewer murders this year than in any other year since 1951. Nighttime ballroom dances are being held in the

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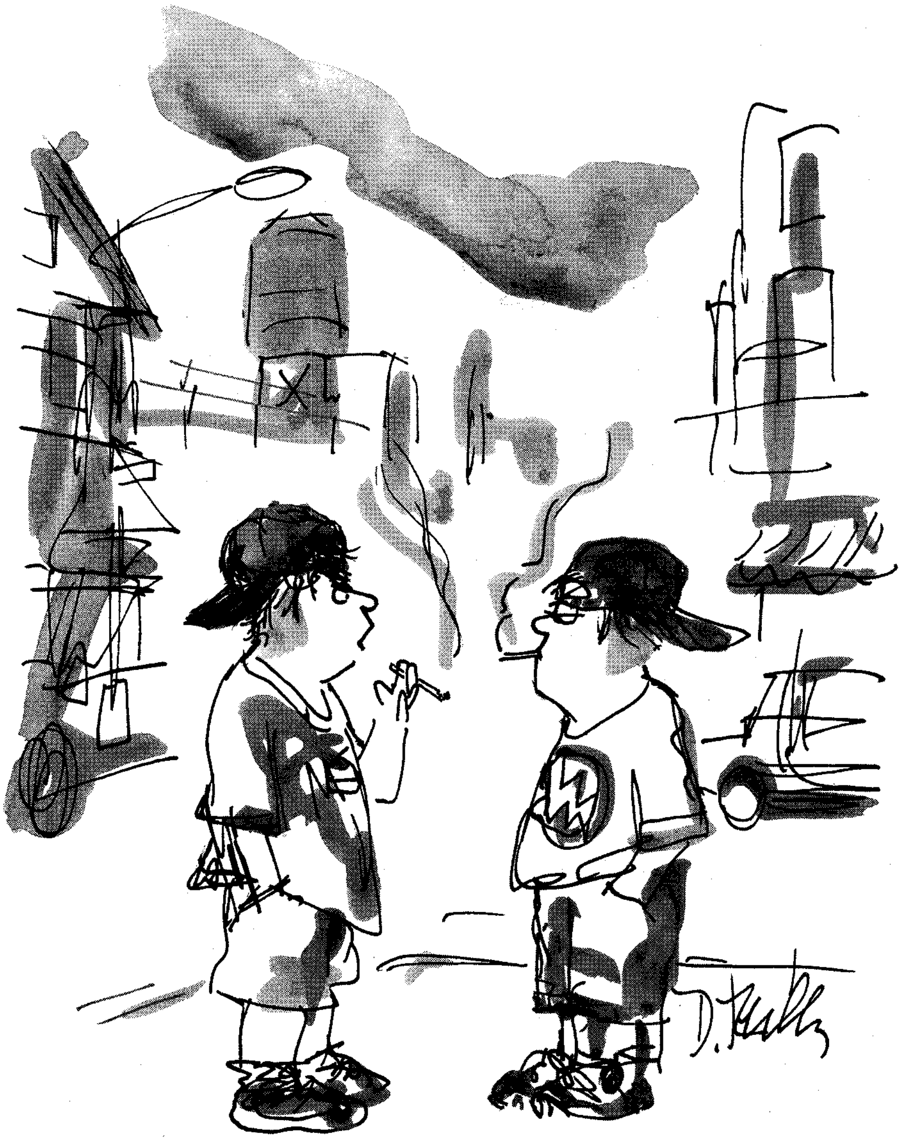
middle of Central Park this summer. Perhaps all the rational criminals, the deterrable ones, have been scared out of the business or locked up. So, examined as a social phenomenon, crime might seem to be a less significant force in American life than it has been for a generation. Yet it's never been bigger box-office.

Much of the reason has to do with an absence of competition from other stories. The United States is at peace, there are no wars nearby, and the economy has never seemed in better shape. Our main political parties are, even more than usual, pale imitations of each other. And the ideological uniformity stretches well beyond our own Democrats and Republicans. What, precisely, separates the Christian Democrats in Germany, the Labour Party (and the Tories, too) in England, the Socialists in France, and the Communists in China? Not very much, except that the Chinese Reds are more pro-business.

One compelling explanation of our ever more ghoulish obsessions comes from Mark Edmundson, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, who will publish a book this fall entitled "Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic." Edmundson argues that "American culture at large has become suffused with Gothic assumptions, with Gothic characters and plots." He's not just talking about Stephen King and Hannibal Lecter. "On broadcast news, in the most respected daily papers, on TV talk shows . . . in our medical and environmental discourses, and even in advanced brands of intellectual analysis, the Gothic mode is ascendant," he writes. Gothic melodramas—"O.J., Michael Jackson, John and Lorena, Nancy and Tonya, and many others like them"—are presented to the public in the form of "hot entrails for the audience to puzzle over so as to divine where society has gone and why."

It is true that an earnest search for larger meaning accompanies each of the new tabloid sensations. These undertakings are usually doomed, being nothing more than futile attempts to find nutritional value in brain candy. At this late date, for example, try to recall the sociological lessons of the Nancy and Tonya imbroglio. (At this point, you have to try even to recall what happened.) Still, the significance detectives remain alert to sniff out the importance of even the looniest national preoccupations. In a classic of the genre, *Newsweek* recently devoted a whole page to the proposition that Mike Tyson's munch on Evander Holyfield's ear illustrated the tragic cost of the reluctance of many black men to seek psychotherapy. Or is it that Tyson's misdeed symbolizes the national crisis of poor eating habits?

It's true that just as the Sacco-and-Vanzetti case helped define the nineteen-twenties in American life, the Simpson saga can explain part of our own era, but to think that every time someone tries to break a figure skater's leg we should deem it a barometer of a new social climate is a bit much. In fact, the Tyson story and, perhaps, the Versace murder as well are probably not metaphors for anything at all. They don't have to be—just as many important subjects don't have to come packaged in a Gothic narrative, much less one featuring a celebrity. ("JACKO IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE SHOCK"? "KATHY LEE'S MEDICARE SECRETS"? "REVEALED: PAM ANDERSON'S HEARTACHE OVER NATO EXPANSION"? Don't hold your breath.) If there's a war or a recession, no one will have to force anyone to become interested in it. Likewise, no one can stop people from indulging a taste for the macabre and the sensational. This kind of dialectic—the worthy clashing with the sinful, the high-minded with the debased—is a classic part of the Gothic tradition. We identify with its pulls and pushes because, of course, they're going on inside us all the time. —JEFFREY TOOBIN



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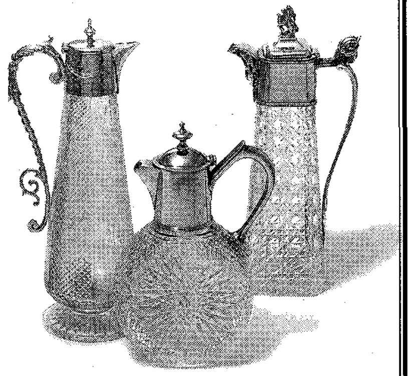

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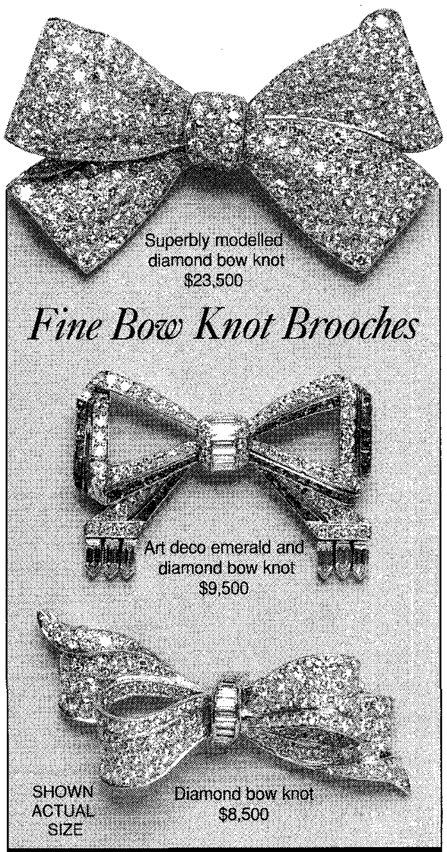

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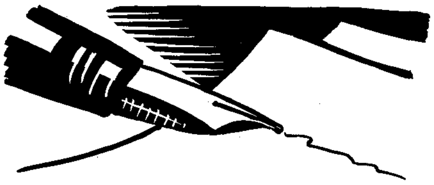

TELLING INDIA'S STORIES

Notwithstanding the growing presence of Indian faces in ads for long-distance telephone companies, I've felt us to be far out of the mainstream; Salman Rushdie is quite right when he says that "contemporary Indian literature remains largely unknown in the United States" ("Damme, This Is the Oriental Scene for You!," Special Fiction Issue, June 23rd & 30th). Your India issue prompted me—and, I hope, others, both Indian and American—to reassess this literary genre. And, as for John Updike's question of where the future material of writers such as Arundhati Roy and Ardashir Vakil will come from (Books, "Mother Tongues"), it's here, of course, in America. And in England, Canada, Australia. Wherever the diaspora is living, stories are as yet largely untold.

SOHRAB HOMI FRACIS
Jacksonville, Fla.

Mr. Rushdie, who should know better, claims in his overview of Indo-Anglian literature that the recent writing by Indian authors in English is "a stronger and more important body of work" than the writing in the "vernacular" languages. He admits that he read the latter only in English translations, and he comments, rightly, on the poor quality of some of those translations. But he does not seem to be aware that much of the good writing has not been translated at all. As an avid reader of both Indo-Anglian literature and one of the major languages (Bengali), I can assure Rushdie that there are several novels and many short stories in that language alone—most of them yet to be translated—which are far superior in both vibrancy of style and richness of theme to any of the Indian writing that has appeared in English. I applaud the recent flowering of Indo-Anglian writings, but let us not claim too much for them out of ignorance of the rest of Indian literature.

PRANAB BARDHAN
Berkeley, Calif.

As a young Sri Lankan writer, I had a vested interest in the contents of the India issue, and I consumed it from beginning to end, even though the cover left a sour taste in my mouth. As I looked at the illustration of two very white people in safari gear discovering Lord Ganesha reading in the forest, I wondered why the work of Indian authors was wrapped in such postcolonial packaging. I was also disappointed that there were no selections from any Sri Lankan authors. Nonetheless, the issue expands American notions of India and its people beyond the myopic idea that India is chaotic, mystical, and reeking of curry. With the rise in the number of Indian writers and the increased notice being taken of their work, America and the world are beginning to see that India is as complex as any other place, as troubled and triumphant, and as full of stories and the people to tell them.

TANYA SELVARATNAM
New York City

THE RULES OF WAR

Amory Bradford's letter regarding Clare Boothe Luce's idea for the assassination of Hitler (June 16th) reminded me of an ingenious plan devised by my father, Sir Douglas Jardine, when he was the British governor of Sierra Leone, in 1941.

The Germans were gaining ground in North Africa, and he was secretly approached by the German High Command with a proposal that he move his troops in Sierra Leone to the wrong border when the German Army invaded the country. For this help, my father was to receive "clement treatment" in the event of a German victory. My father wrote to Whitehall suggesting that he should agree to go to Berlin to discuss the moves he might make. In his pocket he would have a box of Swan Vesta matches with yellow-fever germs sealed inside. My father had been vaccinated against yellow fever, a fatal disease, so while talking to Hitler he would be able to light his pipe or cigarette and crush the box of matches.

Whitehall replied that on no account was he to do any such foolish thing: it would not be cricket to murder Hitler.

PENELOPE JARDINE
S. Giovanni in Oliveto, Italy

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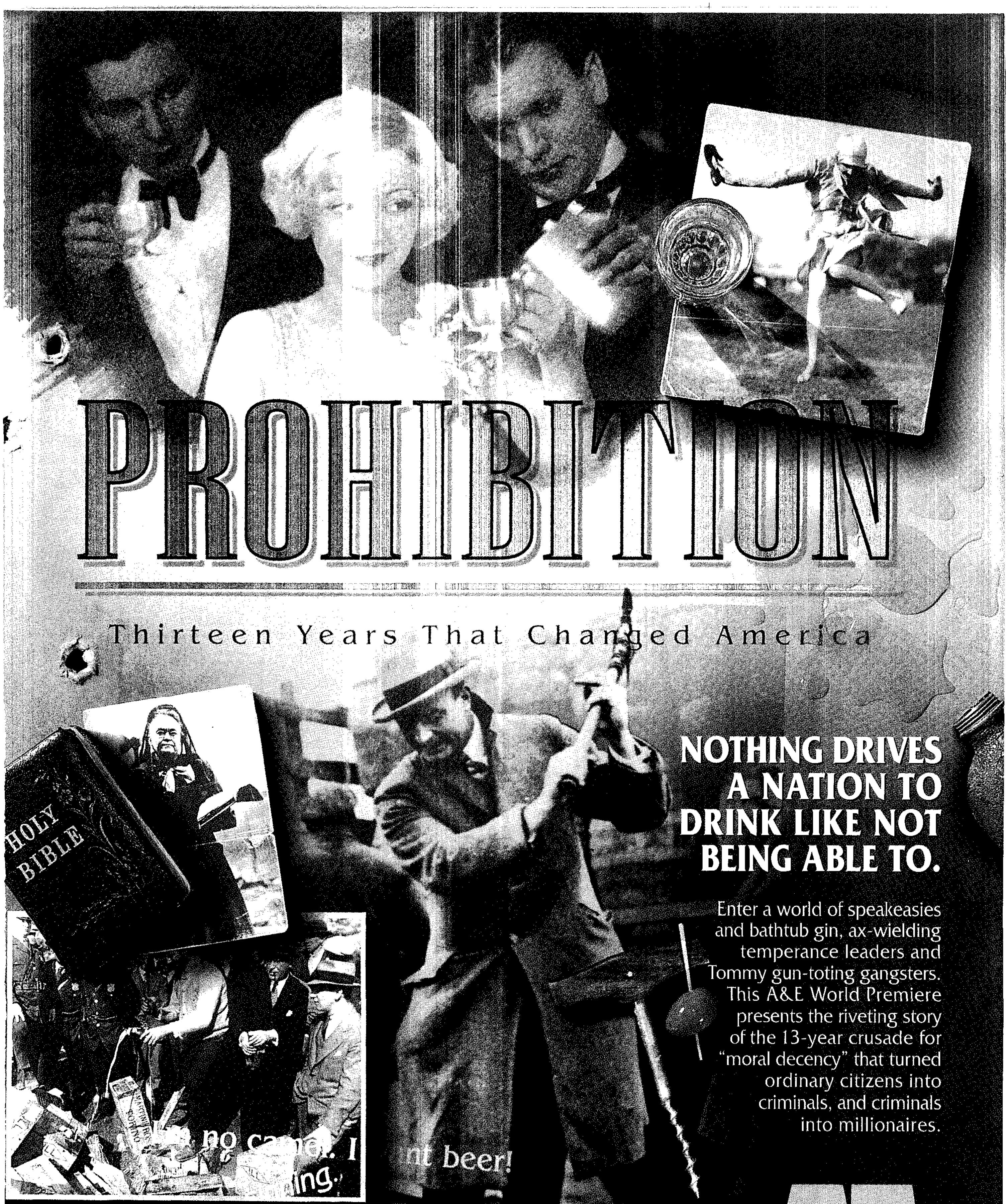
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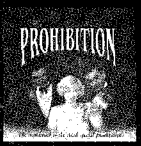

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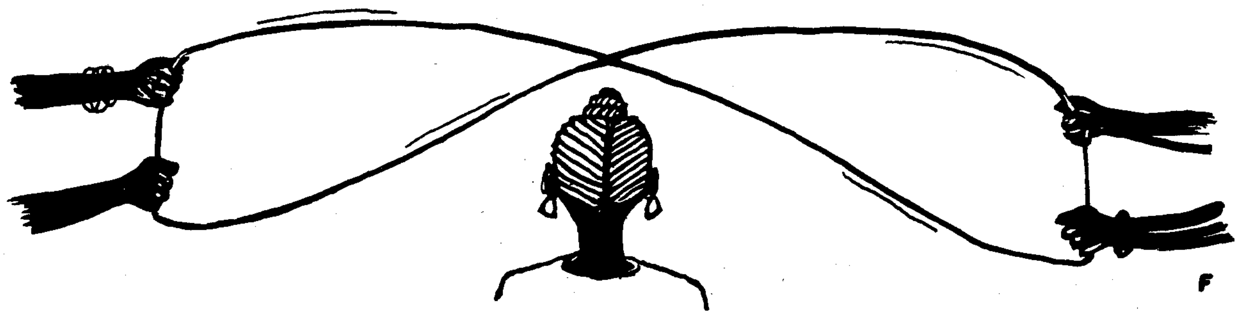

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

As You Like It—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's second and final offering of the summer, directed by Nick Mangano. Previews July 23-25. Opens July 26 at 8. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575.)

Blueprint Series—The Ontological Theatre's annual festival for emerging directors opens July 23 at 8 and continues through Aug. 3, with works staged by Kate Browne, Jonathan Jacobs, Damon Kiely, and Lane Savadove. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Cigarettes and Chocolate—American Opera Projects presents Anthony Minghella's tragicomedy with music, adapted from his 1988 radio play, about a woman who stops talking. Directed by Gabriele Jakobi. Opens July 29 at 8 and continues through Aug. 9. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. 431-8102.)

Measure for Measure—The Worth Street Theatre has set its staging of Shakespeare's comedy in America during the sexual revolution of the nineteen-sixties. Previews July 24-27. Opens July 28 at 8. (Greenwich Street Theatre, 547 Greenwich St. 279-4200.)

Misalliance—Shaw's 1910 comedy, in a Roundabout Theatre staging directed by David Warren. In previews. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Portrait of the Artist as Filipino—Nick Joaquin's 1952 drama about a painter and his two middle-aged daughters, set in Manila before the Second World War. In previews July 26-27. Opens July 29 at 7 and continues through Aug. 16. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

1776—The 1969 musical by Sherman Edwards (music and lyrics) and Peter Stone (book). Directed by Scott Ellis. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Sugar Down Billie Hoak—Brian Silberman's drama about two homeless teens, set in the New York subway at night, comes with a *strong-language/graphic-sex warning. In previews* through July 27. Opens July 28 at 8:30. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Ah, Wilderness!—The National Asian American Theatre Company presents O'Neill's 1933 comedy. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 505-3003. Closes Aug. 3.)

Always . . . Patsy Cline—Not quite a revue, not quite a play, this spirited and Nashville-slick celebration of the late, great country singer is, rather, a streamlined song-delivery device: Tori Lynn Palazola, who plays Cline, sings twenty-one songs in a mere two hours. The show is based on Cline's relationship with a fan in Houston, played with large-hearted gusto by Margo Martindale. Palazola doesn't sound exactly like Patsy, but she's good at doing Patsy, and more than good when it comes to the slower numbers. The unsung, as it were, heroes of the production are the six members of the backup band, titans of twang all. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

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27	28	29				

Annie—Can the powerhouse waif find another bonanza in this twentieth-anniversary revival of her Broadway musical? With eight-year-old Brittny Kissinger wearing the red fright wig, anything is possible: no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the New York public. Directed by Martin Charnin. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

As Bees in Honey Drown—In Douglas Carter Beane's comic indictment of America's obsession with fame, J. Smith-Cameron is hilarious as a cultural arbiter whose fabricated personality is, as an adoring Saks salesman (T. Scott Cunningham) puts it, "a mixture of every woman I've ever loved in a movie." The script, which has been given a vivid production by the Drama Dept., is a gleeful bon mot-filled éclair whose satirical power sours only when, every once in a while, it takes itself too seriously. Cunningham and Mark Nelson are both delightful in multiple supporting roles. With Bo Foxworth, as the young novelist who falls under Smith-Cameron's spell. Mark Brokaw directed. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

The Ontological Theatre's Blueprint Series.

JOSH GOSFIELD

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer's rich, unmiked voice hits every note of sarcasm and self-loathing in William Luce's rambunctious script as he perfectly captures the grief behind the old ham's gallant frivolity. Well directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bermuda Avenue Triangle—In this silly farce, a sexy gambler on the skids (Joseph Bologna) returns the zing to the lives of two elderly women, a Jew (Renée Taylor) and a Catholic (Nanette Fabray), whose sullen daughters have put them out to pasture in a Las Vegas retirement home. Bologna and Taylor's script traffics in the kind of cookie-cutter stereotypes that rate high on the matinée-crowd yuk-o-meter. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Candide—Spectacle substitutes for satire in this revival and revision of the 1956 Leonard Bernstein–Lillian Hellman–Richard Wilbur musical, directed by Hal Prince. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/19/97.) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Collected Stories—Donald Margulies takes on the subject of literary betrayal in his new play, which stars Maria Tucci as a distinguished short-story writer and Debra Messing as a graduate student who absorbs her professor's lessons all too well. The pair are well directed by Lisa Peterson, and Tucci is especially good at expressing the various degrees of heartache that inevitably come to all mentors. (6/2/97) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 27.)

Come Clean—Jeff Weiss and Carlos Ricardo Martinez's "new musical epic of sex and survival," hosted by Mr. Weiss. July 25-26 at 10:30. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

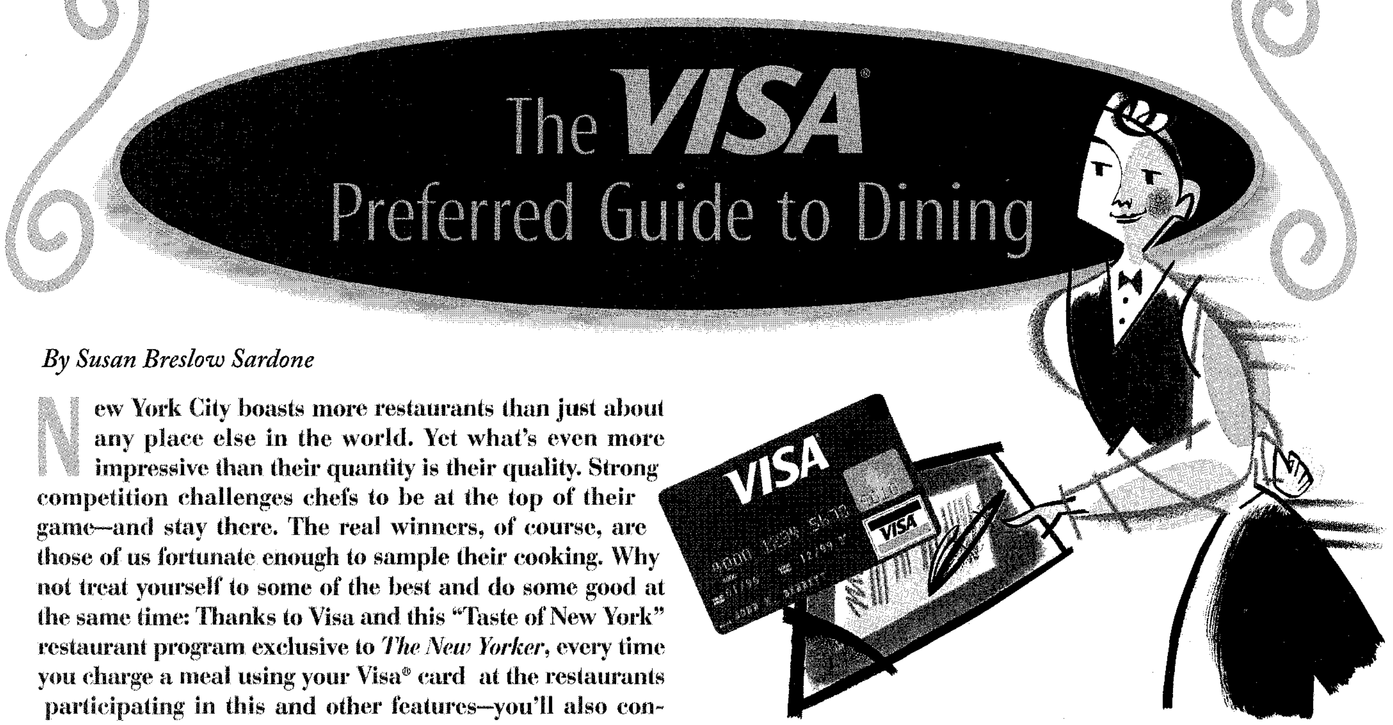
A Doll's House—A thrilling version of Ibsen's play, imported from the West End. Anthony Page's scrupulous, sensitive direction catches all the music and irony in the collusion between Nora (in a masterly turn by Janet McTeer) and her husband, Torvald (the passionate Owen Teale). (4/14/97) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Forever Tango—This stepchild of Vegas and Buenos Aires gets everything right, from the basic ingredients (sex, pomade) to the big emotions (e.g., the weltschmerz of the bandonion players). The real treat is the character dancing: it's a big surprise to encounter so many styles—suave, measured, sleazy, torrid, muscular, slapstick—and such a variety of song-length minidramas. Created and directed by Luis Bravo. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Gin Game—Julie Harris and Charles Durning shine in the National Actors Theatre's funny, poignant revival of D. L. Coburn's 1977 play, about two elderly people who discover an antidote to their loneliness in a card game. Charles Nelson Reilly directed. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde—Writer-director Moisés Kaufman renders the playwright's

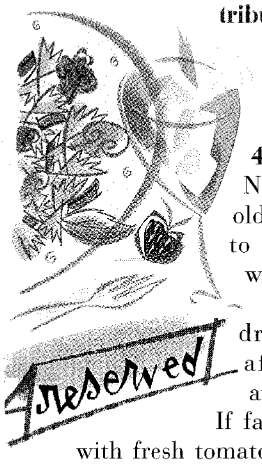
TASTE OF NEW YORK



The VISA® Preferred Guide to Dining

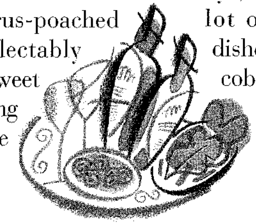
By Susan Breslow Sardone

New York City boasts more restaurants than just about any place else in the world. Yet what's even more impressive than their quantity is their quality. Strong competition challenges chefs to be at the top of their game—and stay there. The real winners, of course, are those of us fortunate enough to sample their cooking. Why not treat yourself to some of the best and do some good at the same time: Thanks to Visa and this "Taste of New York" restaurant program exclusive to *The New Yorker*, every time you charge a meal using your Visa® card at the restaurants participating in this and other features—you'll also contribute to Citymeals-on-Wheels, a nonprofit organization that delivers hot meals to the homebound elderly.*

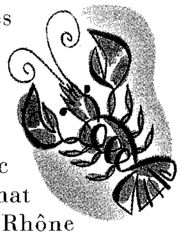


COCO PAZZO TEATRO • 235 West 46 Street • 212-827-4222 As stylish as New York, as vibrant as Broadway, year-old Coco Pazzo Teatro is a welcome addition to the Theatre District. A spacious room with ample banquette seating, the restaurant is both a comfortable and dramatic-looking setting to enjoy an affordable lunch or dinner. Pay close attention when the waiter recites the specials: If farrotto—a nutty grain cooked like risotto with fresh tomatoes and red snapper—is available, it's an earthy and satisfying dish. For a refreshing dessert, choose watermelon parfait, concocted with watermelon sorbet, granita, and the fruit itself, plus creamy panna cotta, and garnished with candied watermelon rind.

DEMI • 1316 Madison Avenue (93rd St.) • 212-534-3475
Nestled inside a handsome Upper East Side brownstone, Demi is a cozy, peach-colored haven where the conversation is hushed and the service staff aims to please. If you ask your amiable waiter to recommend a red wine, he may suggest Mezza Corona Teroldego Rotaliano 1993: Take his advice. Chef Marc Rosen's menu features appetizers such as citrus-poached artichoke flavored with lobster essence, and delectably light cous-cous crab cakes with mango, papaya, sweet pepper relish, and an avocado dressing. A smoking room is on the second floor, and Demi's outdoor terrace is a wonderful setting for a private cocktail party.



LA COLOMBE D'OR • 134 East 26th Street • 212-689-0666
Charming as a bistro on the French Riviera, La Colombe d'Or is one of New York's most enduring, romantic spots. Located on the ground level of adjoining brownstones, this intimate restaurant sets the mood with exposed brick walls, tin-stamped ceilings, and banquettes upholstered in Provençal fabric. Chef Naj Zougari, a master of the vibrant flavors of the Mediterranean, creates favorites such as cassoulet and bouillabaisse. For summer, try the chilled tomato soup with crabmeat and chives to start. Seared tuna with basil, or cod with white beans, roasted tomatoes, and tapenade (a savory olive, anchovy, and garlic spread) are two light, tasty dinner entrées that can be enhanced by a selection from fine Rhône Valley wines.



MESA CITY • 1059 Third Avenue (62nd St.) • 212-207-1919
Feeling prickly from the heat? Cool off with a frozen cactus-pear margarita at Mesa City. At the bar, two TV sets are tuned to sports, rousing a young and energetic Upper East Side crowd. In the bustling dining area (a less formal version of downtown's Mesa Grill) patrons hunger for chef/co-owner Bobby Flay's highly original, contemporary southwestern fare. He says, "It's fairly basic stuff, but each mouthful packs a lot of punch." Tantalizing yet moderately priced dishes include tomato tortilla soup, barbecued chicken cobb salad, and grilled tuna tostada with black bean-mango salsa. Or try one of his uniquely north-of-the-border quesadillas, such as wild mushroom and goat cheese with roasted pepper relish. •

Illustrations by Steven Salerno

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trials from edited transcripts, interposing passages from letters, Wilde's writings, and other people's memoirs and commentaries. The result, thanks to Kaufman's clever (if occasionally self-indulgent) direction and a strong, versatile cast—especially Michael Emerson, in the title role—is powerful and surprisingly theatrical. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

How I Learned to Drive—Paula Vogel's memory play, about a young woman (Mary-Louise Parker) who comes of age too quickly under the tutelage of her pedophile uncle (David Morse), is a clear-eyed marvel. Ms. Parker and Mr. Morse continue in the show through July 27. Jayne Atkinson and Joel Colodner take over on July 29. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Ice Factory 97—The third offering in the SoHo Think Tank's summer series of new plays is "Investigation of an Image," by Jude Domski. July 24-26 at 7. The festival continues through Aug. 24. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

Jekyll & Hyde—Enjoyable bombast, loosely based on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel. With music by Frank Wildhorn, lyrics and a book by Leslie Bricusse, and solid direction by Robin Phillips. (5/12/97) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In this romantic comedy of manners, set in Atlanta in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Life—This new musical, about the oldest profession in Times Square (before it became known as the new Times Square) and the men who profit from its practitioners, is a cynical, poisonous concoction, featuring phony funk, fake blues, overcooked pop, and a cartoonish, insulting book. The cast includes some good singers, notably Lillias White and Pamela Isaacs. (5/12/97) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Lincoln Center Festival 97—"Le Cercle Invisible," Victoria Chaplin and Jean-Baptiste Thierrée's two-person performance piece inspired by circus and vaudeville. July 22-25 at 7 and July 26 at 2. (John Jay Theatre, Tenth Ave. at 58th St.) . . . ¶ "The Aquarium: A Meditation on Life in the City," a tone poem with text, music, and set by Connie Beckley, who also performs the work. July 22, July 24, and July 26 at 8. (Clark Studio Theatre, Rose Penthouse.) . . . ¶ "Umabatha: The Zulu Macbeth," a revised and expanded version of Welcome Msomi's 1969 work, which transposes the Scottish Play to nineteenth-century tribal Africa and incorporates traditional Zulu dance, storytelling, and music. July 23-26 at 8 and July 27 at 3. (New York State Theatre.) . . . ¶ "Woza Afrika: After Apartheid," a series of plays by South African playwrights. July 23-25 at 7, July 26 at 2 and 7, and July 27 at 3: "On My Birthday," by Aubrey Sekhabi. (LaGuardia Concert Hall, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St.). . . July 23-26 at 9:30 and July 27 at 7: A double-bill performance of "White Men with Weapons," by Greig Coetzee, and "Once a Pirate," by Paul Slabolepszy. (LaGuardia Concert Hall.) (For more information, call 875-5030.)

Mass Appeal—A revival by the Irish Repertory Theatre of Bill C. Davis's 1980 play, about a popular if not particularly religious priest (Tony Coleman) who must cope with a seminarian (Paul McGrane) whose intellectual passion overwhelms his humanity. The story of what each man teaches the other is a familiar one, but it's told well and with humor. And, because it's about priests, the play also explores vexed questions about faith and compassion and power, intelligently enough to give the evening some real depth. The two actors give strong performances under the deft direction of Charlotte Moore. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Mere Mortals and Others—Six short plays by David Ives, who created the wonderful "All in the Timing." Only two are new, but they are Ives at his clever best. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

My Night with Reg—The New Group wraps up its season with British playwright Kevin Elyot's 1995 comedy about a group of six gay friends. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes July 26.)

No Strings Attached—Todo con Nada presents a retrospective of the works of Richard Foreman. (NADA, 167 Ludlow St., south of Houston St. For tickets and schedule information, call 479-7989. Closes Aug. 3.)

Notions in Motion—Jeremy Dobrish's very loose adaptation of Pirandello's "Each in His Own Way" consists of some very funny sketches stitched together by long stretches of overblown blather, nearly redeemed by a surprise ending that subverts the entire notion of theatre and theatrical truth. The cast of this Adobe Theatre Company production, directed by Mr. Dobrish, is for the most part terrific. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 560-7387. Closes Aug. 9.)

Student Body Assembly—The performance artist Holly Hughes is joined by graduates of her Performance Artists Correspondence School and by members of Future Homosexuals of America. July 28 at 8. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Tell-Tale—Theatre Couture puts a drag spin on Edgar Allan Poe, in a comic thriller starring Sherry Vine and Jackie Beat. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Those Left Behind—A psychological mystery by Ben Bettenbender, starring Rob Sedgwick and Janis Dardaris. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 246-5877.)

Titanic—Though this musical about history's most tragic maiden voyage contains no small number of historical and theatrical misjudgments, it nevertheless manages to take you very close to the heart of the matter, and it qualifies as a genuine addition to American musical theatre. Richard Jones directed. (5/12/97) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FULL GALLOP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. (Closes July 27.)

DANCE

The Royal Ballet—The premier British company brings a trio of programs (and ballerina Darcy Bussell) for its first New York performances in three years. July 23-24 and July 26 at 1:30: "Cinderella." . . . ¶ July 23 and July 25 at 8: "La Valse," "Daphnis and Chloë," "La Fin du Jour," and "Pavane pour une Infante Défunte." . . . ¶ July 27 at 1:30 and 8: "Prince of the Pagodas." (Metropolitan Opera House. 875-5030.)

ODC/San Francisco—Choreographer Brenda Way's company has changed its style since its Oberlin days. "The music I chose used to be more esoteric," she says. "Now I have four kids. I hear very loud boom boxes all the time." The program for the first week of her two-week engagement offers similarly kinesthetic accompaniment: "Weird Weather," for example, matches the company's attack to a score of pure percussion; "Under the Jaguar Sun" pulses to composer John Santos's Afro-Cuban rhythms. "We fuse classical values and more pedestrian ones," Way explains. "The movement of the street meets the movement of the studio." Program B, the full-length "OutaWak," based on Norton Juster's "The Phantom Tollbooth," begins July 29. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Program A: July 22-25 at 8 and July 26 at 2 and 8. Program B: July 29 at 8. Through Aug. 2.)

Dances for Wave Hill—The Bronx garden closes its summer series of site-specific choreography with work by Wen Hui, Nami Yamamoto and Guta Hedewig, and Lynn Marie Ruse (who leads children from the Riverdale Neighborhood House). (W. 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For information, call 718-549-3200. July 23 at 6:30 and July 27 at 5.)

Central Park SummerStage—A split bill: Joy Kellman & Company present "Again" and "Clearing," both of which show off the troupe's wall-bouncing, Super Ball style of movement; and Dance Kumikokimoto offers "Untitled," choreographed and directed by Koosil-Ja Hwang, about ancestral imprints on the lives of its characters. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 25 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

Noche Flamenca—Soledad Barrio joins Bruno Argenta (replacing Barrio's injured husband, Martin Santangelo) to anchor this eight-member troupe of dancers, singers, and guitarists as it brings the passionate vocabulary of flamenco (the proud carriage, flashing hands, declarative boot work, intensely focussed gazes) to the intimate Theatre 80. (80 St. Marks Pl. 279-4200. July 23-26 and July 29 at 8, and July 27 at 3. Through Aug. 17.)

Pilar Rioja—The *reina* of Spanish dance celebrates a quarter century of New York seasons with a range of work, from "La Monja Gitana," based on a García Lorca poem about a nun reminded of her gypsy childhood, to her latest piece (in a more secular vein), "Orgía." (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. July 23-24, July 27, and July 29 at 7; July 25 at 8; and July 26 at 3. Through Sept. 7.)

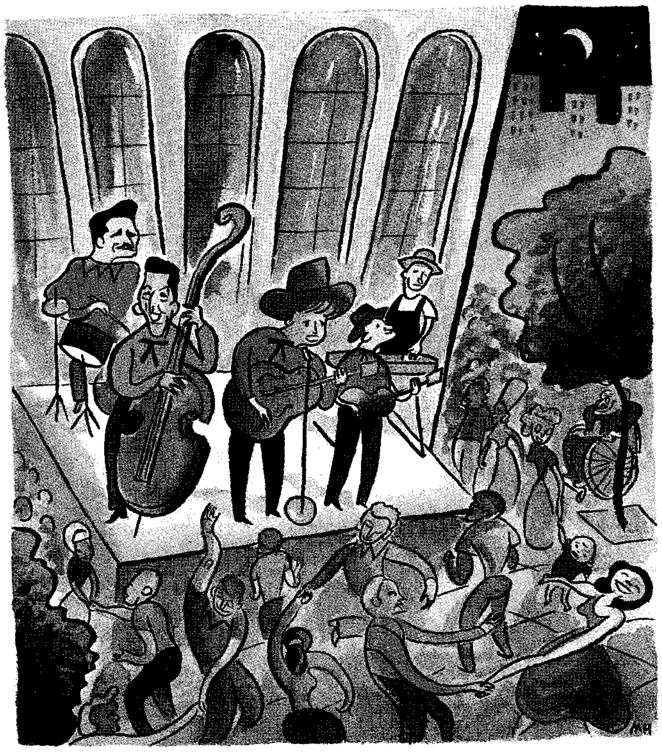
OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—July 22-24 at 8, July 25 at 8:30, and July 26 at 2 and 8:30: Elizabeth Streb/Ringside. . . . ¶ July 24-25 at 8:15, July 26 at 5, and July 27 at 7: David Dorfman Dance, in "Job," "Gone Right Back," and, in collaboration with the former Yankee pitcher Jim Bouton and other Berkshire area jocks, "Out of Season: The Athletes Project." (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

EMMANUEL PIERRE

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS



BR5-49, at Lincoln Center's Midsummer Night Swing.

MARCELLUS HALL

⚥—Say what you will, scoff if you dare: the last time The Artist played New York (a small charity show at the Roseland Ballroom), he reconfirmed that prodigious, interplanetary talent with a two-and-a-half-hour show, the high point of which was a long, funky guitar vamp that ended with his dropping the guitar, running across the stage, sliding under the piano and up to the keys, and—without missing a beat—segueing into a fleet-fingered jazz solo that would have made Art Tatum giggle. His big problem, of course, is his thickheaded insistence that everything he writes is manna from the Lord. He's wrong—only about seventy-five per cent is. But live even his second-rate material is a taste of heaven. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. July 23 at 8.)

TINA TURNER / CYNDI LAUPER—She's still got the legs (as evidenced by her deal with Hanes), but the voice and the material have developed a few runs. Still, how often do you get to see a real, honest-to-God legend?/ The sine qua non of eighties kitsch. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. July 23, July 25-27, and July 29-30, all at 8.)

"EXPRESIONES LATINAS"—Part of the Lincoln Center Festival 97. July 23 at 8: Singers Gilberto Santa Rosa and Andy Montañez, two master *soneros* from Puerto Rico. July 24 at 8: From Venezuela, popular singer and storyteller Franco De Vita, performing on the birthday of Simón Bolívar. July 25 at 8: Cachao, a singer who has popularized the mambo and the *descarga* ("jam session"), and Africando, a group comprising three singers from Senegal and two dozen Latino musicians from New York. July 26 at 8: Sultry pop singer and dancer Daniela Mercury, from Bahia, and nouveau-Cuban-pop chanteuse Albita. July 27 at 5: Puerto Rico's reigning pop sensation, Ednita Nazario, in her Stateside début. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030.)

JOHN MAYALL AND THE BLUESBREAKERS—The legendary British rocker and his band. (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. July 24 at 6:30. Free tickets, which are required, will be distributed at 5.)

PORTISHEAD—This band from Bristol makes what might be described as purr pop. Geoff Barrow samples old spy-flick music, lush strings, and assorted blips and grinds, then adds reedy keyboards, rim shots, and sizzling cymbals; the slow, evanescent results play like a French film-noir soundtrack you can dance to. Over the mix, Beth Gibbons sings bittersweet love poems in a high, wispy voice that sounds as if she's about to weep. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. July 24 at 8.)

THE PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND—Traditional sounds from the Crescent City. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. July 24 at 8.)

BR5-49—A high-powered hepcat quintet from Nashville which mixes frenetic covers of rockabilly and country-and-Western classics with its own time-warping originals. A chance to do some two-stepping under the stars at Midsummer Night Swing. (The Plaza, Lincoln Center. Tickets available at the entrance. July 24 at 8:15. Dance lessons begin at 6:30.)

"LILITH FAIR"—Canadian pop sensation Sarah McLachlan brings her estrogen-driven all-star review to the Big Apple. Among those scheduled to appear are Tracy Chapman, Joan Osborne, Fiona Apple, the Cardigans, Juliana Hatfield, Victoria Williams, and Lori Carson. (Jones Beach Theatre. July 25 at 4:30.)

NUYORICAN SOUL—The celebratory ten-piece band whose members include George Benson, Jocelyn Brown, Hilton Ruiz, and Tito Puente, and whose eponymous disk is one of the coolest things around this summer. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. July 25 at 9.)

THE ORB—The expansively luscious techno collective. (Carbon, 610 W. 56th St. 582-8282. July 25 at 10.)

JOE LOUIS WALKER—San Francisco bluesman Walker's latest recording, "Great Guitars," was a stunner, with appearances by Bonnie Raitt, Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, Taj Mahal, and Ike Turner. He's joined here by Turner and by Elvis Presley's guitarist, Scotty Moore. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. July 26 at 4.)

ASHLEY MACISAAC / SOLAS—He distinguished himself with a high kick last winter on "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" (in traditional fashion, he wears no underwear under his kilt), but the mad Scotsman is still best known for inspired, fiddle-driven pop. The updated traditional Irish music of Solas makes this a fine Celtic double bill. (Central Park SummerStage. No tickets necessary. July 27 at 3.)

VERUCA SALT / LOCAL H—Once the pride of Chicago, Veruca Salt has gone from being the next big thing to the same old thing. Vocalist Louise Post is still a savage female front woman, but these days she's making more news in her new role as Dave Grohl's girlfriend. / The fine post-punk guitar-and-drum duo. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center. July 29 at 8.)

"DICK AND DEREK'S ANNUAL PIANO PARTY"—The uptown gang—Dick Hyman, Derek Smith, Kenny Davern, Bob Wilber, Dick Sudhalter, and assorted other buddies—finds yet another excuse to hang out together and play masterly traditional jazz. (92nd Street Y. July 29 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The **LOUIS ARMSTRONG LEGACY BAND,** featuring **ARVELL SHAW,** is in July 24-26. Having played bass with the master, Shaw is fully fit to instruct the younger members of the band in how this music should sound. July 27: **CHARLI PERSIP AND SUPERSOUND.** One of the unsung journeymen of the sixties, Persip played to great effect with everyone from Eric Dolphy to Dizzy Gillespie. His vibrant band, with his experience and knowledge as its base, can let down its hair and roar. Mondays are reserved for the **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA,** which features the bandleader's husband, flutist and saxophonist **LEW TABACKIN.** Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Vocalist **REGINA BELLE** is in through July 27. Starting July 29: R. & B. singer **PEABO BRYSON,** who, with Belle, topped the charts a few years ago singing "A Whole New World," from "Aladdin." Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle is dark for the summer, but across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano through Aug. 2.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—The **DONALD HARRISON** quartet holds forth through July 27. Saxophonist Harrison was one of the first members of the early-eighties New Orleans jazz diaspora to hit New York. With his plangent tone, rootsy feel, and pedal-to-the-floor momentum, he made himself right at home. From July 29: One-of-a-kind singer and pianist **MOSE ALLISON.** Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.** Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. July 23-26: Having worked for years as teammates in Scott Hamilton's band, pianist **JOHN BUNCH** and bassist **PHIL FLANIGAN** are as close as pages in the fake book (the musician's name for the volume of basic jazz repertoire that gets toted from gig to gig). It's a document those two pros have probably committed to memory by now.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—**MICHAEL BLAKE** (July 26), a new-wave saxophonist, plays the music of Coleman Hawkins, the virtual inventor of the jazz saxophone. Now that's acknowledging your roots. July 27: The Composers Series features pianists Beverly Smoker and Joe Dechario performing the piano music of Schoenberg, Ives, Crumb, and Martirano. The members of the **DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND** (July 28) are Crescent City revisionists who put the stomp into everything they play, from Jelly Roll Morton to Michael Jackson. James Brown aside, the Brass Band's tuba player may be the hardest-working man in show business. Also on the 28th, **RICKIE LEE JONES** sneaks in a set from her new trip-hop-flavored album, "Ghostyhead."

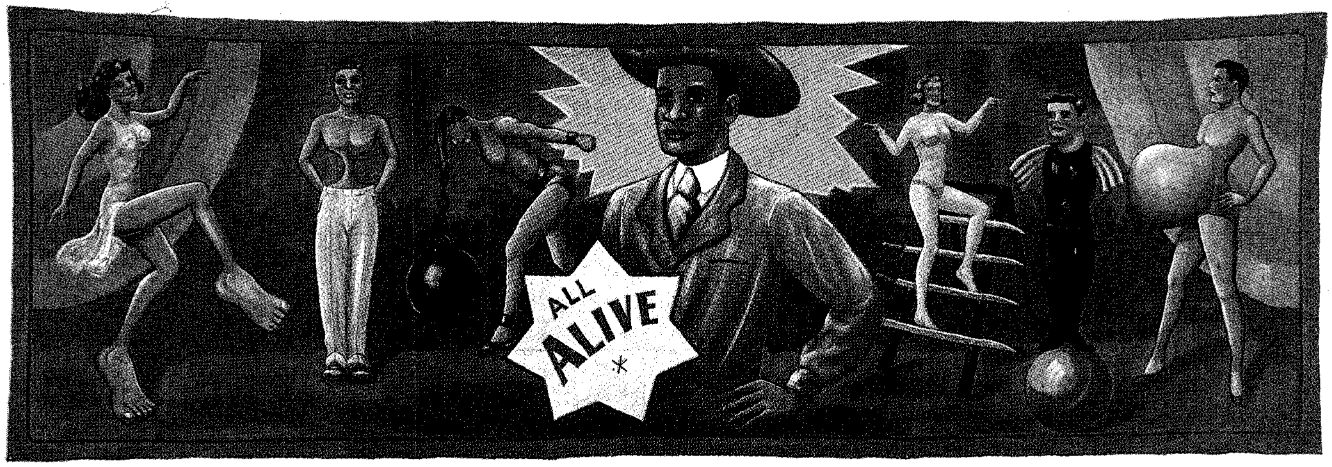
LENOX LOUNGE, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—This Harlem club brings first-rate jazz back north with a vengeance. **BOBBY WATSON,** here July 25-26, is the Cannonball Adderley of our day: an exemplary alto player and a canny bandleader who revels in the pleasure of connecting with the crowd.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. **CINDY BLACKMAN** (through July 27) isn't the only female drummer on the jazz scene, nor is she even the most accomplished of that select lot; still, she's garnered a solid reputation among many of the city's more engaging players, some of whom she may just entice into appearing with her. Dining.

VILLAGE GATE, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—July 24: The **MIKE HASHIM** quintet, with vocalist **LAVERNE BUTLER.** July 25-26: **CORNELL DUPREE, GORDON EDWARDS,** and **STUFF** may not have invented funk, but when the band's sleek ship of a rhythm section surges ahead, you know you're in the presence of groove masters. Guitarist Dupree and his crew all have jazz credentials, but it's their R. & B. that gives them distinction. Early evenings on Tuesdays are reserved for roller-blading octogenarian **DAPHNE HELLMAN**, who also happens to be a jazz harpist. She generally performs with Mr. Spoons (remember "The Ed Sullivan Show"?) and the odd guitarist or cellist. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks and feels like a classic jazz club: subterranean and thick with the spirits of past masters. As consistent as he is ubiquitous, pianist **KENNY BARRON** (in through July 27) turns each set into a lesson in unmannered, eloquent improvising. He may be the most sympathetic accompanist working, but in a trio setting with his longtime partners, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Ben Riley, he's every bit the star. The **BRAD MEHLDAU** trio takes over starting July 29. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—**JIMMY MADISON** and friends are in on July 23. After thirty or so years in the business, the elegant drummer probably has plenty of talented friends more than willing to keep him company on the bandstand. The **MARIA SCHNEIDER ORCHESTRA** is now in its fourth year of Monday nights here; the composer and arranger's big band has settled nicely into institutional status.



A sideshow banner by Snap Wyatt, in "Freak Show," an exhibition at Hirschl & Adler Modern.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. A purring trio of precision-tuned players—pianist **PETE MALINVERNI**, bassist **NEAL MINER**, and drummer **LEROY WILLIAMS**—holds court through July 26. Symmetry and eloquence are guaranteed. Starting July 28: **JUNIOR MANCE** (piano), **JOE TEMPERLEY** (saxophone), and **CALVIN HILL** (bass).

ROCK, ETC.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—The **WAYFARING STRANGERS** drift in with their folk-bluegrass-klezmer fusion on July 23. Something of a supergroup, the band includes vocalists **LUCY KAPLANSKY** and **JENNIFER KIMBALL**, clarinet and mandolin virtuoso **ANDY STATMAN**, banjoist **TONY TRISCHKA**, and violinist **MATT GLASER**. July 24: Former Springsteen sideman **NILS LOFGREN** plays a solo acoustic show. **BUSTER POINDEXTER AND HIS BANSHEES OF BLUE** wail the night away on July 25.

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—July 24: Raised on an ashram and world-weary beyond her twenty years, **LAUREN HOFFMAN** is often compared with another young songwriter, Fiona Apple. But if Apple is the gifted savant, Hoffman is the real thing, a preternaturally talented young adult. Her emotionally draining new record, "Megiddo," shifts from chilling ballad to blackboard-scratching rock.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—**CAREY BELL** (July 25) is an accomplished disciple of the harmonica masters Little Walter (Jacobs) and Big Walter Horton. July 26: The **KINSEY REPORT**. The family that plays together stays together: patriarch Lester (Big Daddy) Kinsey teams up with his three sons' band for an evening of soulful, down-home blues. Lead guitarist Donald Kinsey used to bill himself as "B.B. King, Jr.," and he's so good that B.B., Sr., never seemed to mind.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Former Stray Cat **BRIAN SETZER** brings his seventeen-piece orchestra to town on July 24. With the fine New Orleans jazz band the **FLYING NEUTRINOS**. July 29: Punk survivors **SUICIDAL TENDENCIES** whip up the mosh pit.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—The three-woman operation called **BETTY** is in on July 24. Betty's act, a sort of cabaret gone haywire, contains elements of funk music, performance art, satire, and standup comedy, and it moves along at an amphetamine pace. Also on the 24th, **JOHN S. HALL**, the once and future front man of King Missile. July 25-26: The **TINDERSTICKS**. Something like a younger, hipper Anthony Newly, the Tindersticks' front man, Stuart Staples, is a black-clad boulevardier whose music is lush with weeping guitars and whispering drums. This is the music that gets played after you go to sleep. July 27 brings eager, serviceable indie pop from the **WRENS**, of Secaucus. July 28: British techno with **CARTER THE UNSTOPPABLE SEX MACHINE**.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—**FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS**, those local heroes of smart pop, are in July 24. **SLEEPY LA BEEF** (July 25 and July 27) is an Arkansas boy who is reputed to know six thousand songs; his sets are always full of surprises.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A very special appearance by the **FAMILY STAND** on July 25. Back when, their music was an emotional blast of funk, rock, and soul that featured smart lyrics, precise architecture, and three heaven-sent vocalists. Easy to love but apparently hard to market, they split up three years ago. Their high-spirited club dates were awe-inspiring; this one-off reprise has the makings of legend. With former Living Colour vocalist Corey Glover's **ALTERNATIVE SOUL KOLLECTIVE**. July 26: Brazilian diva **JULIANA AQUINO**. Dining.

SUPPER CLUB, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—The Tony Corbiscello Big Band pays tribute to Duke Ellington on July 25-26. The English boys of **SUPERGRASS** are in with their high-octane power pop on July 29.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—South African reggae force **LUCKY DUBE** (July 24), who graces his shows with a radical reinterpretation of Foreigner's Reagan-era hit "I Want to Know What Love Is." British guitar god **ROBIN TROWER** entertains the troops on July 25. The endlessly appealing **MUFFS** hold court with a show of noise-core on July 26. **DION**, the legendary rock-and-roller from the Bronx, is in on July 29.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Ivan Albright: Magic Realist," a comprehensive retrospective of the Chicago-based painter (1897-1983) of moral rot and deliquescent flesh. The works are far removed from modernist taste, and their hamminess can be tiresome, especially in such a large dose, but they certainly stand out. Remember the 1945 M-G-M version of "The Picture of Dorian Gray"? It was Albright who provided the picture, a grotesque masterpiece that is one of the highlights of this show. His work is icky but compelling, and this is one of the Met's best recent exhibitions of contemporary art. Through Sept. 7. . . . ¶ The museum's collection of Chinese art, one of the finest outside Asia, now has room to glow: after two years of construction, a new series of galleries nearly doubles the exhibition space. These cool, quiet rooms create the ideal atmosphere in which to grasp the rarefied sensibility of imperial Chinese painting, calligraphy, and decorative art. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life," an exhibition devoted to domestic arrangements, from Cézanne's apples to Warhol's Campbell's soup cans. Through Aug. 26. . . . ¶ Cindy Sherman's career began in the late seventies with her witty series of "Untitled Film Stills," sixty-nine black-and-white photographs in which she poses as the protagonist of a variety of noir films: the starlet standing in the door of her motel room, clutching a Martini; the sex kitten splayed on a bed, wearing a clingy silk slip; the smartly dressed career girl dwarfed by the skyscraper canyon of lower Manhattan. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Paris/The 1890s" examines the fin-de-siècle printmaking of Bonnard, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, Vuillard, and others. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Stenberg Brothers: Constructing a Revolution in Soviet Design," an excellent summer show of Constructivist film posters. Vladimir and Georgii Stenberg actually achieved in their energetic and vibrantly colored work the unity of formal innovation and mass appeal that the Russian avant-garde aspired to. Though they did posters for Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, in many other cases it is the posters, not the films they advertised, that have lasted. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "More Than One: Twentieth Century Print Portfolios." Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ The Project 60 room features the work of painters John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, and Luc Tuymans. Through Sept. 9. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"From Dürer to Rauschenberg: A Quintessence of Drawing." A coöperative venture with Vienna's Albertina Graphics Collection presents masterpieces of draftsmanship, from finished portraits to sketchbook whimsies, by seventeen artists, including Raphael, Rembrandt, Fragonard, Kandinsky, and Beuys. Through Aug. 24. . . . ¶ Large-scale sculpture by the Basque minimalist Cristina Iglesias, who favors forthright urban materials—concrete, iron, glass, etc.—and delicately etched surfaces. Through Sept. 7. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Reversible Destiny: Arakawa/Gins." A pair of long-term collaborative projects, "The Mechanism of Meaning" and "Reversible Destiny Architecture," from Arakawa and Madeline Gins, offer a collection of scale models, photographs, and interactive panels that show what can happen when a painter and a poet take on the philosophy of architecture. Through Aug. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Keith Haring." Everybody loves Haring, but he was, in fact, human—a circumstance that seems to have eluded the creators of this breathless beatification posing as a retrospective. There are a few paintings here and there, but most of the space is given over to something reminiscent of the way the Germans restore their great composers' homes: one is permitted to gaze upon (among many other items) the artist's Monkees Fan Club card, his sneakers, his collection of cassettes, his wallet, his cancelled passport. Does it really add to our understanding of Haring's work to see his bill from Mr. Chow? Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ "Frank Lloyd Wright: Designs for an American Landscape, 1922-32," a meticulously curated exhibition of drawings and exquisitely finished architectural models for five utopian resort projects that the Master envisioned for the American wilderness but that were never built. Through Aug. 31. . . . ¶ "Collection in Context: Rockwell Kent by Night." Through Sept. 14. . . . ¶ Twenty-five photographs by Larry Fink, of boxers and their camp followers. Through Sept. 7. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"The Lost World: The Life and Death of Dinosaurs." Fossils, time lines, and a re-creation of a paleontological dig, displayed in the shadow of a seventy-foot-long reconstruction of a mamenchisaurus. Through Sept. 30. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"The Hands of Rodin." More than fifty bronze studies of an extremity the sculptor was quite smitten with. ("There are times," he wrote, "when they seize the void and, molding it as a snowball is molded, hurl it in the face of Fate.") The examples on display are divided into groups ("Hands of Tribulation," "Afflicted Hands," etc.), and many were models for hands in such larger works as "The Gates of Hell" and "The Burghers of Calais." Through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ "Process on Paper: Recent Acquisitions." Prints (Lyonel Feininger, Louise Bourgeois, Vito Acconci), drawings (John Singer Sargent, Kiki Smith), and photographs (Roy De Carava, Lorna Simpson) demonstrate the technical range of works on paper. Through Sept. 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—"Gods, Kings, and Tigers," a magnificent display of court paintings, drawings, and regalia, lent by the royal family of Kotah, a Hindu principality (until India achieved nationhood, fifty years ago) near Jaipur. It's quite a coup for the museum: very few of the objects have ever been displayed outside Kotah before, not even elsewhere in India. The paintings radiate vigor—scenes of martial pageantry, of the god Krishna entertaining his myriad lovers, of princes hunting and hawking. Through July 27. . . . ¶ The seventy-five photographs in "Picturing Hong Kong: Photography 1855-1910" open a window onto one of the most fascinating places on earth. Many of the portraits and scenes of everyday life were produced as tourist souvenirs; other images (for example, twelve decapitated pirates from Kowloon, their heads neatly set beside them on the beach) have the graphic immediacy of classic photojournalism. Through Aug. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

ONLY CONNECT

The Wired World of Paul Allen (http://www.paulallen.com)—Visiting your average personal home page is like peering into your average teen-ager's bedroom: favorite bands and sports teams share the space with inexplicable squalor. The Wired World of Paul Allen is squalor-free, though you will indeed come across references to the software billionaire's favorite musicians (Jimi Hendrix, mainly) and at least two of the teams he roots for. The difference between Allen and most home-page creators is that he owns one of those teams (the Portland Trail Blazers) and has an option to buy the other (the Seattle Seahawks). Allen, who co-founded Microsoft with Bill Gates in 1975, is, as he puts it, a "technology visionary" of reclusive habits and catholic enthusiasms. Of interest to readers of *Forbes* (which just ranked Allen the seventh-richest man in the country, down from third last year) is Allen's portfolio, presented here with appropriate links. Among the companies he has a substantial interest in are Asymetrix, DreamWorks SKG, and N2K Inc., as well as Ticketmaster, which has been engaged in a rather public battle of late with Sidewalk, Microsoft's city-guide Web site. Entrepreneurs take note: you can submit your own business proposal here, and you can address Allen himself in the Personal Profile area.

On an autobiographical time line at the site, Allen equates meeting his erstwhile partner (in 1968, when Gates was in eighth grade and Allen in tenth) with seeing the Jimi Hendrix Experience (in 1969). He left Gates and Microsoft in 1983, after developing Hodgkin's disease, but he's stayed with the guitarist: the Experience Music Project, one of four charitable foundations he heads, just broke ground in Seattle for a Hendrix-inspired museum, designed by Frank Gehry and scheduled for completion in 1999.

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—"Against the Tide" gathers works by five Chinese-born women artists who take domestic detritus as their medium. Hou Wen Yi, for example, embeds cigarettes and tampon wrappers in handmade paper. Yin Xiuxhen unravels old sweaters and reknits them together. Cai Jin paints banana leaves on mattresses and seat cushions. Through Sept. 14. (Open Wednesdays, 3 to 9; Thursdays and Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—"Driving Fashion: Automobile Fabrics of the 1950s" explores the affinities between women's wear and auto upholstery: examples of auto styling from Detroit's golden era (vinyl bucket seats, in fern with mint-green trim and piping, from the '57 Thunderbird) appear alongside designs of equally forthright color and similarly space-age inspiration by Dior, Norell, and Claire McCardell. Through Oct. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—"The Proud Republic: Dutch Medals of the Golden Age." More than forty examples of seventeenth-century work, predominantly in high relief. Through July 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—"Winslow Homer Wood Engravings." The painter and Academy member began his career as a magazine illustrator; this exhibition contrasts these early engravings, for *Harper's* and *Ballou's*, among other publications, with later studies for such paintings as "Snap the Whip" and "Waiting for a Bite." Through Aug. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"Affinities with the East"—A finely curated exhibition of American abstract painting influenced by Asian art. Mark Tobey (1890-1976) and John McLaughlin (1898-1976) both lived in Japan, absorbing widely different lessons there: the former was influenced by the nation's expressionistic landscape tradition; the latter found inspiration in its austere architectural designs. Agnes Martin and Brice Marden, different as they are, both reflect and refract the aesthetics of Asian calligraphy. There is also fine work by Louise Fishman and Pat Steir. Through Aug. 1. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

"Freak Show" / "Happily Married"—Fine art takes a back seat to craft and folk advertising at Hirschl & Adler this summer. "Freak Show," upstairs, comprises seven lurid banners painted in the forties and fifties to lure carnival gawkers. The Alligator Girl, the Rubber-Skinned Man, and people with big chunks of their bodies missing or shifted around are painted in brilliant primary colors, their faces beaming with a weird serenity. "Happily Married," downstairs, surveys the frame maker's art from 1725 to 1950. Some of the pieces are exhibited with paintings, some not; several were designed, or even handmade, by well-known artists, among them Whistler, Hassam, Prendergast, and Marin. One of the paintings, by Henry Walton, is a fascinating snapshot of the main street of Painted Post, New York, in 1851; the frame is flocked, in a floral pattern, with sand on shellac. Through Aug. 15. (21 E. 70th St. 535-8810.)

"Roland F. Pease Collection"—An agreeable selection of American painting which concentrates on the small: Helen Frankenthaler's perfectly elegant two-foot-square "Orange Painting"; an evocative floral still-life by Larry Rivers (swapped by the artist for the use of Pease's piano); a splendid, dynamic Grace Hartigan "Venus and Adonis," after Rubens; a prim portrait of the collector by Fairfield Porter, who is also represented by some landscapes. The largest work is a Kenneth Noland stripe painting, from 1971, though, at just nineteen inches in width, it's uncharacteristically narrow. The tiniest, an abstraction by Ron Gorchov, is smaller than a postcard. Through Aug. 8. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

"Selected Works" / "Early Chinese Pottery"—The new Danese gallery's summer exhibition includes some interesting contemporary work—an exercise in skanky Pop porn by John Wesley, a modest little late Donald Judd, Joe Zucker's retina-searing collage of colored cotton balls—but the real treasures are in the tiny back gallery, where nine superb examples of ancient Chinese pottery are on display. A high-fired gray stoneware jar from the Warring States period (late fifth to third centuries B.C.) is incised with neat geometric designs; a shapely eighteen-inch-tall orange earthenware jar has somehow survived forty-five hundred years in perfect condition. Through July 31. (41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

Group Shows—At **mc kee,** 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (688-5951): Entering the gallery, you are riveted by the gimlet gaze of Leonid Lerman's "Oracle," a wall-mounted eye fashioned from mosaic tiles and copper plates, with a blue velvet iris (stuck with pins) and a charcoal pupil. Philip Guston is represented by two pencil drawings and a painting from his late "cartoon" period; Annette Lemieux contributes a big floor piece of plaster-cast feet doing puzzling things. Through July 31. . . . **HAIME,** 41 E. 57th St. (888-3550): An agreeable hodgepodge of wildly varied work, ranging from the tacky exuberance of Niki de Saint Phalle's sculpture of a figure reading a newspaper to Julio Larraz's witty satire of Spanish Baroque painting (a basket of fruit with a camera discreetly tucked in one corner) to Adam Straus's brilliant faux-naïve still-life of a vase of gladiolas with a bullet (an actual bullet, embedded in the panel) a moment away from smashing it to bits. Through Aug. 31. . . . **PACE WILDENSTEIN,** 32 E. 57th St. (421-3292): A rather ill-sorted grab bag juxtaposing the pathetic (recent work by Schnabel and Rauschenberg), the trite (a Calder mobile), and some superb vintage minimalist sculptures; particularly fine is an array of copper plates by Carl Andre (perfect) and a gleaming brass box by Donald Judd. George Condo offers a welcome note of whimsy with his cartoonlike version of a Renaissance allegorical painting, full of high-camp humor, signifying nothing. Through Aug. 22. . . . **DC MOORE,** 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (247-2111): Real and imagined aerial views, by photographers and painters. Through Aug. 14. . . . **GRAHAM,** 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (535-5767): Sculptures, by Michael Ashkin, Ron Baron, Roxy Paine, and George Stoll, among others. Through Aug. 29. . . . **UBU,** 16 E. 78th St. (794-4444): A line apiece from Carl Andre (on a postcard), Andy Goldsworthy (of snow, zigzagging up a tree), Robert Mangold (in charcoal, on charcoal), and other artists. Through July 31.

SHORT LIST—**ELLA BERGMANN-MICHEL,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Sept. 10. . . . **JOHN GRIEFEN** and **ANNE PERETZ,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Both shows through July 29. . . . **LEONARD STOKES,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Through July 30. . . . **MICHAEL WETZEL,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through July 25.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

STEFAN ALTENBURGER—"Let's Make Things Better," a video installation by the young Swiss artist. The front gallery includes ramshackle sculptures made of cardboard, crates, and miscellaneous detritus from the streets of New York; a video of the artist giving a performance amid the junk is projected on the wall. In the rear are photographs and video sculptures. The work is evenly pitched between engaging and annoying. Through Aug. 8. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

TOM BALDWIN—Photographs, paintings, sculptures, and computer-generated images. The artist has an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to the legacy of Conceptualism—his works are about abstraction, representation, Le Corbusier, Los Angeles, whatever. Not good. Through July 31. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

"MARGINS"—A modest but intelligent group show featuring Conceptualist photo/text works by Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, Gordon Matta-Clark, and Vito Acconci. The highlight: a photo documenting Matta-Clark's most ambitious project, "Splitting" (1974), in which the artist literally cut a wooden house in two. Through July 30. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

GROUP SHOWS—At **303 GALLERY,** 525 W. 22nd St. (255-1121): A very hip selection of gallery artists in various mediums; the over-all impression is one of a gnarled, nervous neo-Pop. Alex Bag contributes an amusing video in which her brother portrays Damien Bag (a sendup of the British art star Damien Hirst) driving around upstate New York searching for road kill with which to make his art. Downstairs is a spooky audio installation by Kristin Oppenheim: a pitch-black room in which we hear only the sounds of a little girl—talking, giggling, crying. Through Aug. 1. . . . **BALDACCI,** 521 W. 21st St. (463-0919): Sculptures, paintings, and photographs, by St. Clair Cemin, James Hyde, Vik Muniz, and others. Through July 31.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

DOUGLAS KOLK / HANS ACCOLA—Kolk's drawings and light boxes follow a character he calls Suicide Girl, revelling in the kind of chirpy nihilism that is now a familiar element of post-punk zine culture. What elevates his work above the obvious is his strangely delicate draftsmanship and color sense; here alienation can be devastatingly pretty. Accola's sculptures, on the other hand, are further variations on one of modernism's quintessential inventions, the readymade. He features some buckets, cinder blocks, a metal folding chair, etc., but his choices are uncompelling. Both shows through Aug. 1. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

"1970"—A pleasingly tawdry installation by Art Club 2000, a collective of young artists, none of whom had been born by that purportedly pivotal year. In one room, a tumulus of black-and-white TVs reduces some of the era's best-known artists (Alex Katz, Carolee Schneemann, Isa Genzken, Vito Acconci, and others, all filmed in a portable studio re-created a few feet away) to a babble of talking heads. Around the corner, a video nook outfitted with groovy red couches offers a more respectful take on the same interviews, in individual doses and living color. Through Sept. 26. (American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. 941-0401.)

GROUP SHOWS—At **A/C PROJECT ROOM,** 15 Renwick St. (219-8275): A collection of works related only by the cussedness of their inspirations. Installation artist Kirsten Mosher lays out a white-carpet pedestrian crosswalk; glassblower Josiah McElheny matches duplicates of the glasses in Leonardo's "Last Supper" with his knockoffs of glassware actually available in first-century Palestine; and Michel Auder offers a video "autobiography" that includes footage of a dewy-eyed Eric Bogosian acting zonked. Through July 31. . . . **FOTOUHI CRAMER,** 560 Broadway (431-1304): Paintings, sculptures, videos, posters, footprints, etc., loosely alluding to drugs, flowers, and the Summer of Love, by Karen Finley, Damien Hirst, Peter Max, Yoko Ono, Roxy Paine, et al. Through Aug. 2. . . . **SEAN KELLY,** 43 Mercer St. (343-2405): Drawings by Ed Ruscha, Julião Sarmento, Calum Innes, and friends. Through Sept. 5.

SHORT LIST—**IAN ABDULLA,** Steele, 420 West Broadway. 941-8388. Through Aug. 2. . . . **CONNIE BECKLEY,** Davies, 23 Commerce St. 243-6840. Through July 28. . . . **WADE HOEFER,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through Aug. 19. . . . **CHRISTOPHER LESNEWSKI,** Trans Hudson, 416 W. 13th St. 242-3232. Through Aug. 2.

PHOTOGRAPHY

LILLIAN BASSMAN—Some truly chic fashion shots from the photographer's midcentury tenure at *Harper's Bazaar,* including the patent-leather pump and well-turned calf of a model crossing a Paris street and a carefree Lisa Fonssagrives speeding in a sporty convertible. Through Aug. 1. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.) . . . ¶ A larger retrospective of fashion work and personal projects is at the Fashion Institute of Technology through Aug. 16. (Seventh Ave. at 27th St. 217-5800. Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

MARILYN BRIDGES—In the past, the rarefied fortress city of Machu Picchu and the stately pyramids at Giza have been rewarding if slightly predictable subjects for this fine aerial photographer. Now Bridges has gathered sixteen years' worth of imagery from the United States into a book, "This Land Is Your Land" (Aperture), and many of the less spectacular sites on view in this show prove even richer in dividends. A spare dirt-road intersection in Avon, New York, feels cold and haunted. A tilled triangular field in Lone Wolf, Oklahoma, points to the enduring human spirit bound up in the land. Through July 31. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

MARIANNE COURVILLE—Vivid rephotographed frames from the artist's home movies of the sixties and seventies: a light image of a tutued, waterskiing showgirl; an ominous sleek black car with a door open, ready for a family spin; an Easter-egg hunt in the woods of upstate New York. Through Aug. 15. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

GEORGE DANIELL—A gratifying group of New York City street images from the thirties and forties. Daniell could capture the glow—not only in the signs but in the pavement as well—of Times Square at dusk (including the old Times Building before that awful Miami Beach marble façade was added), or the everyday pride of a fruit seller alongside the docked Queen Mary ("Cherries, 5¢ a bag"). In one street scene, in front of Macy's, a long 1939 bus with two spare tires on the back reads "Paterson-Passaic-Rutherford-New York"—a wonderful precursor to New Jersey Transit. Through Aug. 1. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

LARRY FINK / KATHERINE TURCZAN—This social documentarian's knack for capturing the hard-edged sadness in the lives of his subjects stands out here in a dozen pictures from the Pennsylvania boxing circuit. Welcome glimpses of humor brighten some of the other pictures, including two shots at a black-tie affair and a handful of images from recent Presidential primaries. Through Aug. 29. (A show of the artist's boxing photographs is at the Whitney Museum, through Sept. 7.) / Four finely executed black-and-white studies of young women from the United States and from Ukraine, in which the photographer limns psychological portraits through keen observation of body language and the subject's gaze. Through Aug. 1. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

MARC RIBOUD—The first New York gallery show of the globe-trotting French photojournalist (he once drove a used Land Rover from London to Calcutta) features vintage prints of scenes from Africa, Iran, the Soviet Union, India, China, and the United States. In almost every image—from two boys play-fighting on a glowing beach in Ghana to three Beijing toddlers walking arm in arm—Riboud's reserved brand of journalism and personal essay shines brightly. Through Aug. 1. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.) . . . ¶ A large exhibition of photographs Riboud shot in China over the past forty years is at the International Center of Photography, through Sept. 14. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"ADOLESCENTS"—Images of inscrutable youth, including a desperately chic high-school graduate, by August Sander (one of six by the photographer), and a tall, angry tomboy wielding a baseball bat in the middle of an empty New York street—an early Diane Arbus. Also on view are works by Ellen Brooks, Mike Disfarmer, Judith Joy Ross, Adam Bartos, and Rineke Dijkstra. Through Aug. 15. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Closed Mondays.)

"BACKYARDS"—A broad, appealing survey of domestic spaces, from the sprawling, uneasy suburbs to the crowded but genial city. Elijah Gowin, once the subject of pictures by his father, Emmet, shows here for the first time; his view of a toy horse suspended in a vine-covered shed has a good deal of Southern mystery to it. There's a Weegee of a shirtless man sleeping on his fire escape (heat wave—sound familiar?), a beautiful Ray K. Metzker near-abstraction from Albuquerque, and a dark, talismanic 1971 Mapplethorpe, of Patti Smith behind a screen door, topless. Other great works come from Garry Winogrand, Joe Deal, Abelardo Morell, Larry Fink, Mary Berridge, and Lee Friedlander. Through Aug. 15. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223.)

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Asia Society.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

New York Grand Opera—The company, conducted by Vincent La Selva, performs Verdi's "Il Corsaro," in a fully staged production. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 23 at 7:30. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 245-8837.)

Royal Opera, Covent Garden—Great Britain's leading opera company performs Hans Pfitzner's "Palestrina," with tenor Thomas Moser in the title role and a cast that also includes soprano Ruth Ziesak, tenors Robert Tear and Anthony Rolfe-Johnson, and baritones Alan Held, Sergei Leiferkus, and Thomas Allen. Christian Thielemann conducts. (Metropolitan Opera House. July 24 and July 26 at 7. For information about tickets, call 875-5030.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—The orchestra's free parks concerts continue. July 25 at 8: Markand Thakar conducts Glinka's "Russlan and Ludmilla" Overture, Bach's F-Minor Keyboard Concerto (with pianist Cyrus Chestnut, whose jazz trio also offers several selections), and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. (Miller Field, Gateway National Recreation Area, Staten Island.) . . . ¶ July 28 at 8: Keith Lockhart ascends to the podium for Dvořák's Scherzo Capriccioso, Copland's "Appalachian Spring," Bernstein's "Symphonic Dances from 'West Side Story,'" and Gershwin's "An American in Paris." (North Meadow, Central Park. For rain-date information about either concert, call 875-5709.)

St. Thomas-on-the-Bourne Choir—The choir of men and boys from Surrey, England, performs a forty-minute concert of music by Mendelssohn, Finzi, and others. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. July 27 at 12:15. No tickets necessary.)

Mostly Mozart—In the opening concerts of the season, Gerard Schwarz conducts the Festival Orchestra in works by Mozart: the Symphony No. 34, excerpts from "Così Fan Tutte" (with soprano Carol Vaness and mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade), and the C-Major Piano Concerto (K. 467, featuring Peter Serkin). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. July 29-30 at 8. The festival continues through Aug. 23.)

RECITALS

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Members and guests of the society offer an all-Pfitzner concert, comprising his Cello Sonata, Piano Quintet, Sextet (for clarinet, strings, and piano), and a group of songs. (Alice Tully Hall. July 23 at 7. For information about tickets, call 875-5030.)

"Music in the Garden"—Outdoor performances by flutist Iris Derke and harpist Lisa Tannebaum of works by Ibert, Persichetti, and Bach. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. July 23 at 7:15. No tickets necessary.)

Robert Parkins—The University Organist of Duke University performs the complete organ works of Brahms. Though they occupy a brief and relatively uncelebrated page of the composer's catalogue, they provide insights into important moments early and late in his career. He first turned his attention to the instrument in 1856-58, while engaged in the intensive study of counterpoint and early music, and the four studies he composed at the time—a stand-alone fugue, a choral prelude and fugue, and two prelude-and-fugue couplings—pay due homage to the style of Bach. Brahms did not contribute anything more to the organ's solo repertoire until May and June of 1896, when he produced his Eleven Choral Preludes, a collection in which consummate contrapuntal skill (considerably refined through the preceding four decades), harmonic ingenuity, and thematic integration combine in an atmosphere of overwhelming melancholy. The group concludes with a setting of the chorale "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen" ("O World, I Must Leave You"), a transcendent work that, prophetically, would be the last piece Brahms composed before succumbing to the downward spiral of liver cancer. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. July 24 at 1. Admission by contribution.)

Cast members of the New York Grand Opera, taking a break from an open-air rehearsal in Central Park.

MARC ROYCE

Bargemusic—July 24 at 7:30 and July 27 at 4: Violinist Mark Peskanov and his musical family—soprano DeBorge Pinnington (his partner), pianist Alexander Peskanov (his brother), and flutist Lu Ann Peskanov (Alexander's wife)—offer a recital of works by Franck, Schubert, Chopin, and Prokofiev. . . . ¶ July 25 at 7:30: The Messrs. Peskanov perform Mozart's G-Major Violin Sonata (K. 301); Edward Arron comes to the fore in Shostakovich's Cello Sonata; and all join for Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Summergarden—The Museum of Modern Art's outdoor concert series, which this summer investigates the music of foreign-born composers who moved to the United States, continues with a recital of piano duets by Grainger, Davidovsky, Milhaud, Carlos Sánchez Gutiérrez, Ezequiel Viñao, Pablo Ortíz, and Leonid Hrabovsky, performed by Stephen Gosling and Eric Huebner. (14 W. 54th St. July 25-26 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

"Sundays on the Island"—Violinist Ariel Shamai, cellist Iris Regev, and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform Mozart's Piano Trio in B-Flat Major (K. 502), as well as several of Mr. Rechtman's "Jazzicals." (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. July 27 at noon.)

Immanuel Davis—Flutist, performing works by Messiaen ("Le Merle Noir"), Philippe Gaubert, and Françaix, with pianist Stephen Gosling. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. July 27 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Music from Aston Magna—Tenor Frank Kelley, violinist Daniel Stepner, cellist Loretta O'Sullivan, and pianist Malcolm Bilson, all longstanding associates of the Massachusetts-based early-music center, offer an all-Schubert concert that comprises eight songs, the F-Minor Impromptu for Piano, and two pieces for piano trio: the Notturno in E-Flat Major (D. 897) and the Trio in B-Flat Major (D. 898). Though these two chamber works rarely share a program, the pairing is felicitous since the Notturno was almost certainly composed to be the Trio's slow movement. Schubert ended up replacing it with an Andante that, in truth, works better in the context of the larger piece. Thus orphaned, the Notturno became a victim of mean-spirited musical commentators who to this day pass along the received opinion. It's unfathomable, really: the hushed Notturno weaves a magical spell that prefigures the Adagio of Schubert's C-Major String Quintet (which everybody adores). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. July 27 at 7:30.)

Pomerium—The vocal ensemble, directed by Alexander Blachly, performs sacred works by Palestrina and his contemporaries Lassus, Victoria, and Byrd. (Alice Tully Hall. July 27 at 8. For information about tickets, call 875-5030.)

Iris Regev and Ilan Rechtman—The cellist and the pianist offer works by Schumann (his "Fantasiestücke") and Mr. Rechtman. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. July 28 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—July 23 at 8:30: Yo-Yo Ma plays Bach's unaccompanied Cello Suites No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3. . . . ¶ July 24 at 8:30: Soprano Renée Fleming offers a recital of art songs by Schubert, Rachmaninoff, Debussy, Barber, and Strauss; with pianist Helen Yorke. . . . ¶ July 25 at 8:30: André Previn leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Mozart's F-Major Divertimento (K. 138) and Violin Concerto No. 5 (with Pamela Frank), Haydn's Symphony No. 96, and Ravel's "Mother Goose" ballet score. . . . ¶ July 26 at 8:30: Mr. Previn and the Boston Symphony perform Gould's "Fall River Legend" Suite, Copland's Clarinet Concerto (with the orchestra's principal clarinettist, William R. Hudgins), Schuman's Symphony No. 3, and Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" (with Mr. Previn doubling as pianist). . . . ¶ July 27 at 2:30: Jeffrey Tate conducts the Boston Symphony in Elgar's Serenade for Strings, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (with Christian Zacharias), and Brahms's Symphony No. 3. . . . ¶ July 27 at 8:30: Yo-Yo Ma performs Bach's unaccompanied Cello Suites No. 4, No. 5, and No. 6. . . . ¶ July 29 at 8:30: Songs by Robert and Clara Schumann, Schubert, Grieg, and Britten, performed by soprano Barbara Bonney and pianist Caren Levine. (Lenox, Mass. 413-637-1600.)

Caramoor—July 25 at 8: The St. Petersburg String Quartet performs quartets by Haydn, Shostakovich, and Brahms. . . . ¶ July 26 at 1: A family concert. . . . ¶ July 26 at 8:30:

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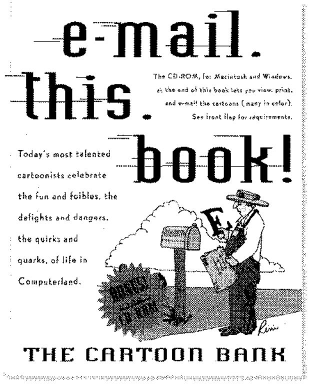

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The Orchestra of St. Luke's performs music by Beethoven: the "Coriolan" Overture, the F-Minor String Quartet (Op. 95, in Mahler's symphonic arrangement), and the Piano Concerto No. 4 (with Garrick Ohlsson). On the podium is Peter Oundjian, who is beginning to establish himself as a conductor after fifteen years as the first violinist of the Tokyo String Quartet. . . . ¶ July 27 at 5:30: The Tokyo foursome, with Mikhail Kopelman (formerly of the Borodin String Quartet) occupying the chair vacated by Mr. Oundjian, plays quartets by Schubert, Barber, and Brahms. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS—The Brentano String Quartet performs quartets by Bartók (his Third) and Haydn (in B-Flat Major, Op. 71, No. 1); violist John Kochanowski and cellist Grace Mihi Bahng assist in Brahms's G-Major Sextet. (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217. July 27 at 3.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN—The St. Lawrence String Quartet performs Schubert's G-Minor Quartet (D. 173), Osvaldo Golijov's 1992 "Yiddishbbuk," and (with Leonard Hokanson assisting) Fauré's C-Minor Piano Quartet. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 27 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

BRIDGE-AND-TUNNEL-AND-PRAIRIE CROWD—This weekend, Queens, already the most ethnically diverse of the city's boroughs, welcomes yet another group of people—or peoples—when members of more than forty Native American tribes gather at the Queens County Farm Museum for the nineteenth annual Thunderbird American Indian Midsummer Powwow. Dancing competitions—in which the rules are so strict that the loss of a single bead or feather from a dancer's costume means disqualification—promise to be the highlight. Each afternoon starts with a grand entry procession featuring all hundred and eighty dancers, in full regalia, marching into the farm's three-acre apple orchard, where the powwow is held. (73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Floral Park. July 26, from 1 to 5 and 7 to 10, and July 27, from 1 to 4. For more information, call 718-347-3276, ext. 52.)

BALANCING ACT—Rollerblade, the company that has become synonymous with in-line skating, brings a celebration of the sport to Riverside Park (at 108th Street) on July 25-27, from 10 to 6. While novices are being instructed in the finer points of balancing on a few rolling inches of polyurethane, more advanced skaters can find out whether the hours they've spent dodging curbs, potholes, and taxicabs help them in handling an eleven-foot-tall half-pipe ramp, an eight-foot-tall quarter-pipe ramp, a six-foot-tall mini-ramp, and other obstacles. For more information, call 888-252-3352.

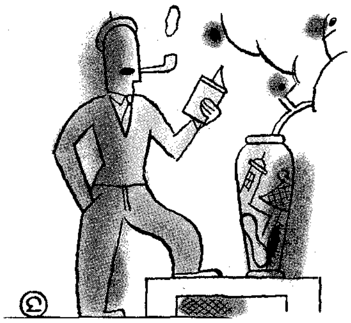
READINGS—July 23 at 6:30: Eileen Myles and Ed Sanders give an open-air reading of their poetry. (Union Square Park. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 23 at 8: California State Senator Tom Hayden reads from the essay collection he recently edited, "Irish Hunger: Personal Reflections on the Legacy of the Famine." (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., at 29th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 24 at 7:30: Richard Grossman reads from his novel "The Book of Lazarus." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ July 24 at 8:30: Memoirist Frank McCourt and poet and playwright Dael Orlandersmith read from their work. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary.)

WALK—July 27 at 11 A.M.: The Urban Park Rangers lead a tour of Highbridge Park, starting at 174th Street and Amsterdam Avenue and culminating at the top of the approximately two-hundred-foot-tall High Bridge Watch Tower, a remnant of the Old Croton Aqueduct.

BOOK CURRENTS

Dandies

GENTLEMEN perusing the fall collections might be surprised to learn how important literature has been in forming our views of men's fashion. The nineteenth-century dandy Beau Brummell mesmerized the literary world by matching sartorial perfection with an elegance of wit in a manner that William Hazlitt celebrated in his essay **BRUMMELLIANA** (available from Oxford). Richard Martin, the curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, recommends Ellen Moers's **THE DANDY** (University of Nebraska Press), an account of Brummell and his successors, and Farid Chenoune's sumptuously illustrated **A HISTORY OF MEN'S FASHION** (Abbeville) to anyone who wants to learn more about the subject. "Dandies had a kind of reasoned principle about the importance of costume," Martin says. Young men inspired by **THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER** (Vintage) wore yellow waistcoats in imitation of Goethe's hero. And Thomas Carlyle's satire **SARTOR RESARTUS** (Oxford), which celebrated dandies as "Clothes-Philosophers," set about proving that all human institutions, because they are temporary, are actually clothes.



The twentieth century has seen a downturn in the fortunes of the dandy. Martin explains that the gradual democratization of dress has made it impossible for a single costume to embody an entire ethos. This shift didn't happen in time to stop the title character in Saki's "Reginald," included in **THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SAKI** (Barnes & Noble Books), from worrying whether an apricot tie would have gone better with his lilac waistcoat, and it certainly didn't deter Sebastian Flyte, in **BRIDESHEAD REVISITED** (Little, Brown), from ordering an ivory hairbrush for his Teddy bear, Aloysius.

Would-be dandies should be warned that their kind frequently come to a sticky end. Brummell himself died penniless and filthy in France, a death Virginia Woolf vividly evoked in her essay "Beau Brummell" in **THE SECOND COMMON READER** (Harcourt Brace). Dandies should also heed the words of the designer Geoffrey Beene: he calls the dandy "the antithesis of what I would consider good in modern men's dress, the pinnacle of which is the sweatshirt with baggy pants and sneakers."

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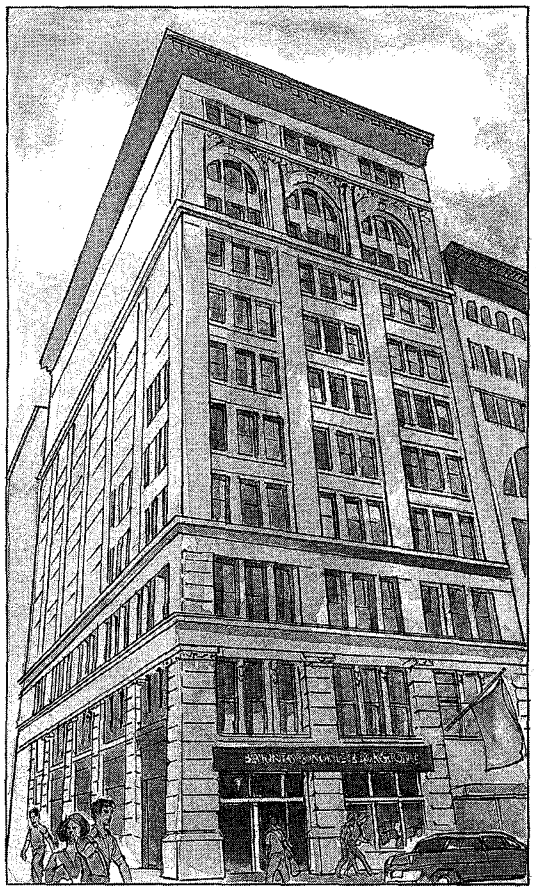

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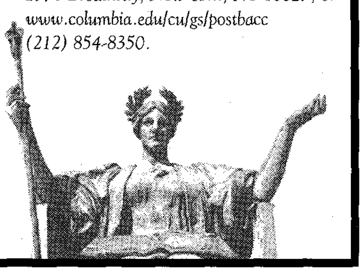

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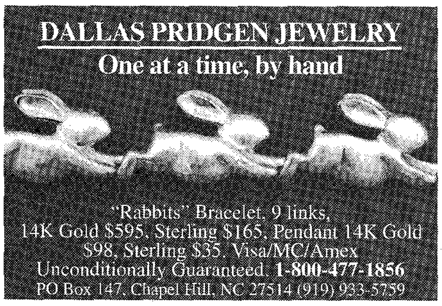

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Air Force One—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 25. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Alive & Kicking—Nancy Meckler's story of a love affair between a dancer (Jason Flemyng) and a therapist for patients with AIDS (Antony Sher). Written by Martin Sherman. Opening July 25. (Quad Cinema.)

Box of Moonlight—A comedy about an uptight engineer (John Turturro) who loosens up when he befriends a free spirit (Sam Rockwell). Written and directed by Tom DiCillo. Opening July 25. (Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village Theatre VII.)

Good Burger—Two teen-agers (Kel Mitchell and Kenan Thompson) take a summer job at a neighborhood restaurant battling a large chain, in a comedy directed by Brian Robbins. Opening July 25. (Art Greenwich Twin, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 2, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

Guantanemera—Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's drama follows a two-car funeral cortège travelling from Guantanemera to Havana. In Spanish. Opening July 25. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Love's Debris—A documentary by Werner Schroeter, focussing on three European divas: Anita Cerquetti, Rita Gorr, and Martha Mödl. In French, English, Italian, and German. Opening July 23. (Film Forum.)

Star Maps—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 23. (Angelika Film Center and 62nd & Broadway.)

The Winner—Vincent D'Onofrio, Rebecca DeMornay, Frank Whaley, and Delroy Lindo star in Alex Cox's comic thriller set in Las Vegas. Opening July 25. (Village East Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 20.)

Batman & Robin—George Clooney plays Batman, Chris O'Donnell plays Robin, and Alicia Silverstone gets the new part of Batgirl, plus all the very worst lines. The villains are Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman), the diamond-powered Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger), and, most noisome of all, Joel Schumacher, who directed, or at any rate arranged various stunts to look something like a film.—A.L. (7/7/97) (Chelsea West, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ 64th and 2nd; through July 24.)

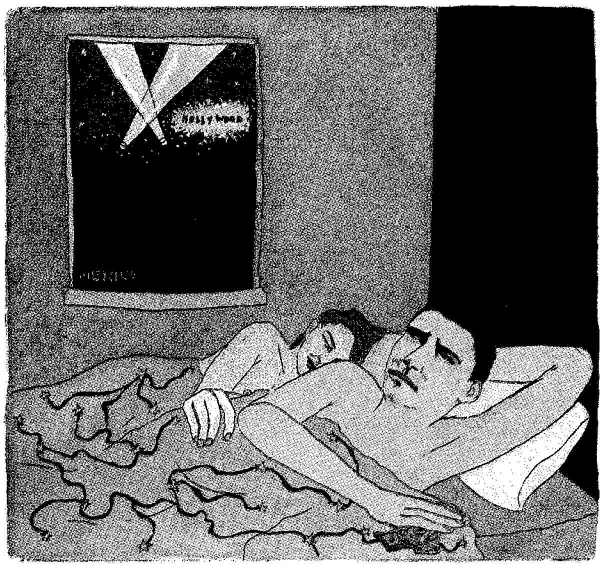
Brassed Off—Mark Herman's surprisingly enjoyable study of the effect of brass-band music on a depressed mining community in the North of England. Pete Postlethwaite stars as the bandleader, Danny. The miners' main reason to keep playing is the arrival of the bewitching Gloria (Tara Fitzgerald), who is actually working for the people who are planning to shut the pit down. The movie emerges, to Herman's great credit, not as stiff dialectic but as kindly, flexible farce. Also with Ewan McGregor.—A.L. (5/26/97) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Brilliant Lies—Anthony La Paglia, Gia Carides, and Zoe Carides star in a drama about a sexual-harassment complaint and its effects on a family. Directed by Richard Franklin, from a play by David Williamson. (Quad Cinema.)

Café Society—Writer-director Raymond De Felitta's true-life tale of the events leading to the 1952 arrest and subsequent conviction of the New York playboy Mickey Jelke on vice charges. With Peter Gallagher, Frank Whaley, and Lara Flynn Boyle. (The Screening Room.)

Con Air—A bunch of America's most unreconstructed convicts, who are being flown to a new high-security jail, commandeer the plane and make a bid for freedom. The cast includes John Cusack as the good guy, John Malkovich as the bad guy, Nicolas Cage as the bad guy turned good, and Steve Buscemi as the bad guy turned extremely strange. The basic formula is now so exposed in its thinness and so blatant in its borrowings that the excitement soon grows horribly routine. Simon West directed.—A.L. (6/9/97) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Metro Cinema. . . . ¶ Embassy 2; through July 24. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; starting July 25.)

Contact—Jodie Foster plays Ellie, a scientist of nervous disposition who spends her days listening for radio signals from space. One day, space calls and leaves a message. Nations club together to build a spaceship, and our heroine is chosen to make the trip; given that the movie has explained her extraterrestrial yearnings as the neurosis of an abandoned child, and, in light of Foster's ceaselessly twitchy performance, it seems inconceivable that Ellie would make a reliable messenger of mankind, but there you go. The climax is hardly worth the wait, especially since Robert Zemeckis's boggy movie takes such a long time to get there. There's barely a smile, let alone a good laugh, in the whole picture, unless you count Matthew McConaughey in the richly ridiculous part of a religious thinker. With Tom Skerritt as a fellow-astronaut and James Woods as the vicious (and very welcome) voice of reason.—A.L. (7/21/97) (Astor Plaza, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square,



Opening July 25, Miguel Arteta's "Star Maps."

LARA TOMLIN

Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Dream with the Fishes—A black comedy written and directed by Finn Taylor, about an encounter between a suicidal young man (David Arquette) and a dying one (Brad Hunt). With Cathy Moriarty. (Angelika Film Center.)

Face/Off—In John Woo's latest action extravaganza, the good guy (John Travolta) and the bad guy (Nicolas Cage) literally exchange faces and voices. The script, by Mike Werb and Michael Colleary, is a comic-book version of some of the director's pet themes, and, incredibly, Woo seems not to have recognized that this story can be treated only as a joke—as, at best, an absurdist, lightly self-mocking put-on. He chooses to render it instead as a parable of good and evil. And his inappropriate gravity has the effect of dulling his natural showmanship; his direction here is, atypically, labored and overdeliberate. Woo takes a full hour to plod through the exposition and complete the identity swap, and after that portentous build-up the high-concept gag doesn't pay off in laughs or thrills: it produces no more than a tiny, disappointing spark, like a damp firecracker. Also with Joan Allen, Alessandro Nivola, and Dominique Swain.—T.R. (7/14/97) (Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

George of the Jungle—The sixties animated hero comes to life in the person of Brendan Fraser, in an action-adventure comedy directed by Sam Weisman. (Chelsea West, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 4, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Hercules—The new Disney animated adventure feels secondhand: the youthful hero is an obvious retread of Aladdin, and the scary ambush sequence is set in exactly the same kind of valley that trapped Simba in "The Lion King." The only good news is the presence of James Woods as the voice of evil. Otherwise, the picture is distinguished only in its unblushing will to sell itself and its spinoff products.—A.L. (7/7/97) (Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, and Village East Cinemas.)

Kiss Me, Guido—Writer-director Tony Vitale's comedy about two actors, one straight and one gay, who become roommates. With Nick Scotti and Anthony Barrile. (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

Late Bloomers—Two women working at a Bible Belt high school fall in love, in a drama directed by Julia Dyer and written by her sister, Gretchen. (Quad Cinema.)

The Lost World: Jurassic Park—Steven Spielberg's sequel to his 1993 blockbuster is, at its best, unmistakably the product of a master craftsman, and this time around he has found a way to amuse himself even as he cranks out a kind of movie that he has obviously outgrown. The director plays on our eagerness to be frightened by his mechanical beasts, and manipulates us so effortlessly that we begin to laugh at how primitive our responses are. With Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, and Pete Postlethwaite. Screenplay by David Koepp.—T.R. (6/2/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Men in Black—Barry Sonnenfeld's science-fiction comedy is indolent, confident, and shy of risks. Tommy Lee Jones (very cool) and Will Smith (speedy and high-spirited) play government agents who spend their days policing the activities of resident aliens; whenever the camera wanders away from them, your attention goes with it. Even Linda Fiorentino, as a horny medical examiner, feels irrelevant to the action.—A.L. (7/7/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Mrs. Brown—John Madden's film explores the love between the aging Queen Victoria (Judi Dench) and her servant John Brown (Billy Connolly). (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

My Best Friend's Wedding—In P. J. Hogan's romantic comedy, a writer (Julia Roberts) learns that her former lover and current best friend (Dermot Mulroney) is engaged to be married; she suddenly realizes that she's in love with him

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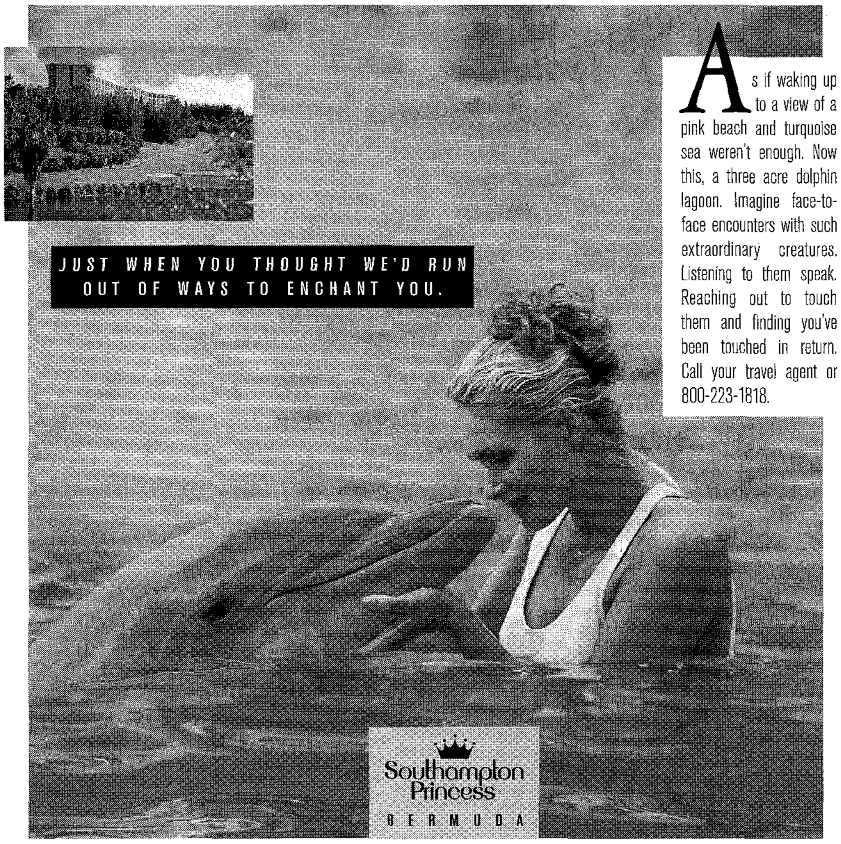
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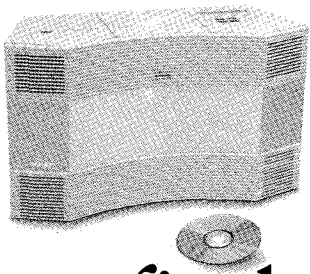

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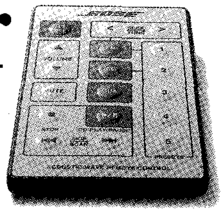

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and resolves to sabotage the nuptials by any means necessary. For the first hour or so, Roberts's enthusiastic, sexy clowning energizes the picture, but then the filmmakers spoil our enjoyment: they allow dull good sense to triumph over their star's outsized appeal. Also with Cameron Diaz and Rupert Everett.—T.R. (6/16/97) (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

Nothing to Lose—In writer-director Steve Oedekerk's comedy, an advertising executive (Tim Robbins) pulls a fast one on a carjacker (Martin Lawrence). (84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

Bert Stern (left) preparing to shoot a scene for "Jazz on a Summer's Day," in a photograph taken on the set by Bruce Davidson.

Operation Condor—An action-adventure movie starring Jackie Chan, who also co-wrote (with Edward Tang) and directed. (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ East 85th Street; through July 24.)

The Pillow Book—A drama written and directed by Peter Greenaway, centering on a woman obsessed with having calligraphic messages inscribed on her body. With Vivian Wu, Yoshi Oida, and Ewan McGregor. In Japanese and English. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

La Promesse—Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's powerful coming-of-age story stars Jérémie Rénier as Igor, a streetwise Belgian teen-ager who helps his scummy father (Olivier Gourmet) traffic in illegal immigrants. When Igor sees one of his father's hapless African victims fall off a ladder, he promises to protect the dying man's wife and child; his struggle to uphold his pledge turns into a morality tale permeated with a Dickensian indignation at evil. A risk-taking, original piece of work. In French.—S.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Shall We Dance?—A middle-aged Japanese businessman of impeccable morals and unshakable habits (Koji Yakusho) sees a young woman standing at a high window; in an act of admirable folly, he tracks her down and finds that she is a dance teacher. He therefore learns to dance—initially in order to be near her, and then, more surprisingly, because he starts to enjoy himself. (His wife has to be kept in the dark about this; ballroom dancing in Japan seems to be on a par with satanic abuse in America.) The writer and director of this tale, Masayuki Suo, may be following the well-worn rule of screen comedy which states that bourgeois codes are made to be broken, but the result is itself so decorously observed, so free of outrage, that the film exerts a cool and slightly mysterious charm. In Japanese.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Temptress Moon—Chen Kaige's gorgeous, insanely portentous allegory of Chinese decadence follows three characters through the first half of this century: an opium-addicted heiress (Gong Li); her brother-in-law (Leslie Cheung), who wanted to be a scholar but has wound up a gigolo and a con man; and a distant cousin (Kevin Lin), who becomes her servant and then patiently, cunningly works his way into power. Once in a while Chen achieves the visual intensity of a great silent film, in stylized shots of a fog-covered garden or in closeups of his haughty, passionate stars. Otherwise, it's a festival of kitsch. In Mandarin.—S.K. (Art Greenwich Twin, Cinema I, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

This World, Then the Fireworks—A middling Jim Thompson story adapted by Larry Gross and buffed to a fifties sheen by director Michael Oblowitz. It has two exceptionally beautiful stars. Gina Gershon, dressed to the nines and as glamorous as Ava Gardner, plays the twin sister of the handsome hunk Billy Zane; their incest-driven grifters fume seductively as they deliver their hyperstylized dialogue. Oblowitz has a jazzy visual style—at one point, he shoots a brief scene through a store window filled with stiletto heels. But the story line is weak, and ultimately this well-dressed noir goes nowhere. Also with Rue McClanahan and Sheryl Lee.—B.D (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Ulee's Gold—In Ulee Jackson, a widowed beekeeper living in the Florida panhandle, Peter Fonda has a role that makes virtues of his expressive limitations. The movie, written and directed by Victor Nunez, is designed to draw this lonely, quietly embittered man out of his emotional hibernation, and for once Fonda's very deliberate style feels appropriate: there's pain in it, and fear, and an awful kind of resignation. Also with Patricia Richardson.—T.R. (6/16/97) (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Regency.)

When the Cat's Away—A timid girl returns from a short holiday to find that her cat, which she had left with a neighbor, has disappeared. As she canvasses her Paris neighborhood, she meets a number of people who help her break out of her solitude and enjoy the promise of her surroundings. The filmmaker, Cédric Klapisch, has a winning way with his group of mostly nonprofessional actors, and through his main character's wanderings he shows a Paris that's changing—a multiracial city with great differences between the young and the old. The modest comic story gives his camera opportunities to dwell on shopkeepers, bar patrons, and elderly neighborhood residents with the kind of pleasure in detail that Martin Scorsese brings to his urban dramas. At the start the movie seems merely lightweight, but in time it begins to flutter like a butterfly, and it lands just as delicately. In French.—B.D. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

ALSO PLAYING

ADDICTED TO LOVE: First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **ANACONDA** (reviewed in our issue of 4/21/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DAY FOR NIGHT:** Paris. . . . **THE DAYTRIPPERS** (3/24/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE DEVIL'S OWN** (4/7/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE ENGLISH PATIENT** (11/25/96): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **GABBEH:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **KOLYA:** 72nd Street East. . . . **LIAR LIAR** (3/31/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MURDER AT 1600:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **OUT TO SEA:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, National Twin, and 34th St. East. . . . **SHOOTING PORN:** Cinema Village. . . . **A SIMPLE WISH:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, National Twin, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **SPEED 2: CRUISE CONTROL** (7/7/97): Criterion Center. . . . **UNDERGROUND:** Anthology Film Archives.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Jazz on a Summer's Day (1960)—The 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, with Anita O'Day, Big Maybelle, Dinah Washington, Gerry Mulligan, Thelonious Monk, Chico Hamilton, Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden, and other joys. Bert Stern's camera style infectiously conveys the festival's happy, lazy-day atmosphere; the America's Cup observation trials, which are also going on, are an unstressed part of the film's visual texture. In the evening, when Mahalia Jackson, with her majestic chest tones, sings the word "soul," she defines it for all time. This is one of the most pleasurable of all concert films. Aram Avakian edited.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; starting July 25.)

Revenge of Frankenstein (1958)—You have to give Hammer Films credit for truth in advertising: the British studio's Mary Shelley-derived series features Baron von Frankenstein, not his monster, as the recurring character. In the second (and snappiest) of Peter Cushing's star turns as the Baron, he puts the healthy brain of a deformed assistant into a normal body—a promising plan, until a smash or two on the patient's noggin turns him into a drooling killer. Cushing plays the bad-good Baron with a double-edged panache: he's self-righteous with his foes, playfully ironic with his allies. And the movie uses Victorian quaintness for seriocomic effects. A demonstration of disconnected eyeballs guiding a severed arm is part *Tales from the Crypt*, part *Classics Illustrated*; the image of Michael Gwynn's fierce yet plaintive monster could pass for a Cruikshank illustration of Marley's ghost. Terence Fisher directed, from Jimmy Sangster's script.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; starting July 29.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**theatre 2:** July 23: "The Tall T" (1957, Budd Boetticher) and "Buchanan Rides Alone" (1958, Boetticher). . . . July 24-25: "Reign of Terror" (1949, Anthony Mann) and "The Tall Target" (1951, Mann). . . . July 26-27: "Murder by Contract" (1958, Irving Lerner) and "Five Against the House" (1955, Phil Karlson). . . . July 28: "Little Annie Rooney" (1925, William Beaudine; silent) and "The Little Princess" (1917, Marshall Neilan; silent), both with Mary Pickford. . . . From July 29: "Revenge of Frankenstein" (†) and "Torture Garden" (1967, Freddie Francis). . . . **theatre 3:** "Contempt" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films written (alone or with others) by their directors. July 24 at 2:30 and July 25 at 8: "The Fireman's Ball" (1967, Milos Forman; in Czech). . . . July 24 at 6 and July 27 at 5: "Love and Death" (1975, Woody Allen). . . . July 25 at 2:30: "Fargo" (1996, Joel Coen). . . . July 25 at 6: "Lone Star" (1996, John Sayles). . . . July 26 at 12:30: "Through a Glass Darkly" (1961, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). . . . July 26 and July 29 at 2:30: "Cries and Whispers" (1972, Bergman; in Swedish). . . . July 26 at 5 and July 28 at 2:30: "Smiles of a Summer Night" (1955, Bergman; in Swedish). . . . July 27 at 12:30 and July 29 at 6: "Late Spring" (1949, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese). . . . July 27 at 3: "Wild Strawberries" (1957, Bergman; in Swedish). . . . July 28 at 6: "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (1987, Norman Mailer).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through July 24: The Sixth New York Video Festival. . . . July 25 at 2 and 6:15, July 26 at 6, July 27 at 4:15 and 8:30, and July 28-29 at 4 and 8: "A Life Apart" (1996, Menachem Daum and Uren Rudolvsky). . . . July 25 at 4 and 8:30, July 26 at 4:15 and 8:15, July 27 at 6:15, and July 28-29 at 6:15 and 9:45: "Jazz on a Summer's Day" (†). . . . July 26-27 at 2: "Mrs. Doubtfire" (1993, Chris Columbus), with Robin Williams.

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes and coming attractions. The feature on July 28 will be "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (1953, Howard Hawks). (Rain date is the following night.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—July 26 at 2: "Blood Simple" (1984, Joel Coen). . . . July 26 at 4: "Red Rock West" (1993, John Dahl). . . . July 27 at 2: "Homicide" (1991, David Mamet). . . . July 27 at 4: "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (1987, Norman Mailer).

The 20th Asian American International Film Festival—Three days (July 25-27) of new films from Hong Kong, the United States, Australia, India, Canada, South Korea, Iran, and Thailand. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. For information, call 925-6014.)

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Films directed by, or starring Vittorio De Sica; in Italian, with English subtitles. July 23-24 at 8: "Umberto D." (1952) and "The Roof" (1957). . . . July 25-27 at 8: "The Bicycle Thief" (1948) and "Marriage—Italian Style" (1964). . . . July 28-29 at 8: "The Bicycle Thief" and "Miracle in Milan" (1950). . . . ¶ July 23 at 8 and 9:30: "Hallelujah the Hills" (1963, Adolfas Mekas). . . . ¶ July 24-25 at 8: "Image, Flesh, and Voice" (1969, Ed Emshwiller). . . . ¶ July 26 at 6: "Haiti Footage" (1950, Maya Deren). . . . ¶ July 26 at 7:30 and July 27 at 4: "The Distant Journey" (1948, Alfred Radok). . . . ¶ July 27 at 6: "Painters Painting" (1972, Emile de Antonio).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—July 29 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Danton" (1983, Andrzej Wajda; in French).

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway. (718-638-5000, ext. 230)—A program of recent films from Brazil, in Portuguese, with English subtitles. July 26 at 3 and 7 and July 27 at 3: "Carlota Joaquina, Princess of Brazil" (Carla Camurati).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On July 27 at 7, the feature will be "The Mirror Crack'd" (1980, Guy Hamilton).

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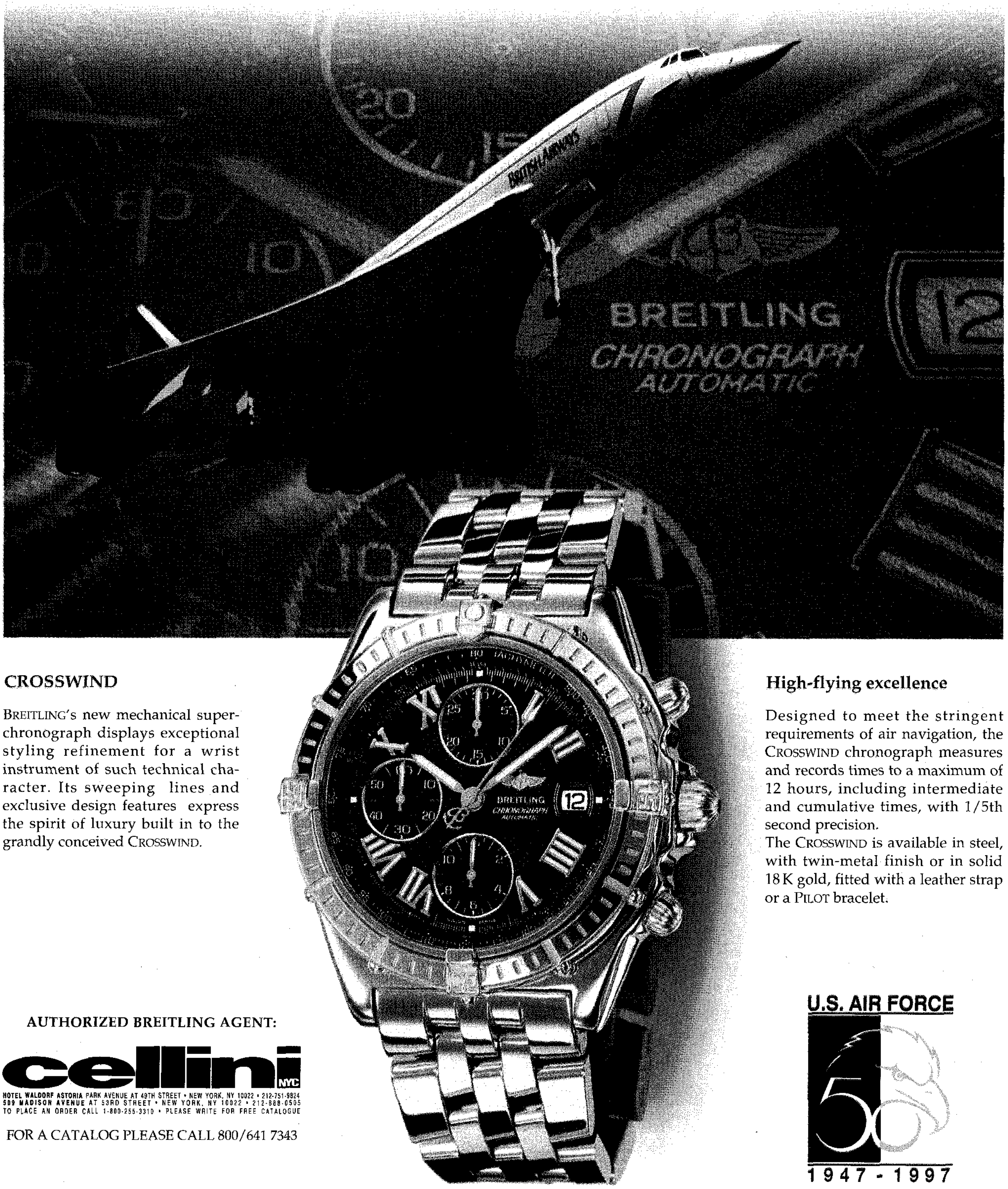

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

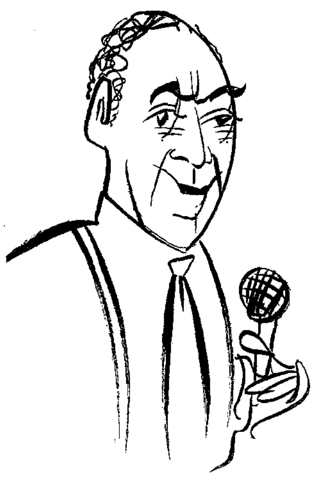
The limits of entertainment on view at the Cosby trial.

ALL trials are theatre. Down at the federal courthouse on Centre Street last week, you had to show up early and stand in line to get a ticket to see "The United States v. Autumn Jackson et al." And when, from backstage, Bill Cosby popped out of a door in the wall behind the judge and took the witness stand, the room came alive. Immediately, he grabbed the microphone, tapping it and adjusting it like a pro, later actually removing it from its stand and holding it, as if he were preparing to do thirty minutes at the Westbury Music Fair. "William Henry Cosby, Junior," he said when asked who he was, and spelled his last name. Then, continuing the monumental ritual coyness, a prosecutor asked "What do you do for a living?" and Cosby replied, "I'm an entertainer."

Then he entertained. He can't help it. Asked by a prosecutor to elaborate on his career history, Cosby said, "There was a time when I sang." A beat, then the punch line: "But that stopped." He was even jaunty while he was being cross-examined. At one point, when a defense lawyer was recapitulating Cosby's answer to his question, the comedian smiled and rhythmically punched the air, like a teacher coaching a confused student. Another time, when he spoke before the judge had ruled on a lawyer's objection to a question, he put his hand to his mouth in a kind of broad, stage *uh-oh*—classic Cosby shtick. When a lawyer asked if he could recall a phone number, he answered, "Let's try." Beat, punch line: "I'm under oath." The lawyer read the number, and Cosby said, "Bingo!"

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM BACHTELL

The comic moments were odd, intriguingly so. Truth is supposed to be stranger than fiction, but it's interesting how often truth is *exactly like* fiction—contrived, implausible, stupid fiction, fiction produced by Aaron Spelling or a Collins sister. That's what this case sounded like in summary: America's ultimate sitcom dad, author of best-selling guides to parenting and marriage, spends a fortune over two decades to cover up a single night of infidelity in Vegas; *plus*, the woman from the fling has insisted to him for twenty years that a baby resulted from their liaison, which he refuses to believe; *and then* the alleged daughter tries to blackmail him; and, what's more, *the very same day* that she asks for forty million dollars his son is murdered on a Los Angeles freeway. But at the trial it became clear that this is a complicated and thought-provoking tale, full of surprising details. In other words, it turned out to be like *good* fiction.



The one person in the courtroom who looked away indifferently as Cosby began testifying was a juror, a black man around Cosby's age. (In bad fiction, he would have smiled reverentially, or given a Black Power salute.) Judith Krantz would not write the fascinating, weirdly elided language Cosby used to emphasize how his pro-social convictions dictate even his choices of commercial endorsements. "Kodak is family, family pictures, family children. The pudding is family," he said, referring to Jell-O. "Ford, car; *family*."

As in a good play or novel, in the end there is no tidy moral, no easy justice, no unmixed motives. For two decades, Cosby had willingly paid Jackson and her mother hush money. The difference between tens of thousands of dollars and tens of millions of dollars seems one of magnitude, not kind. To threaten to snitch and demand forty million dollars is ugly, but legal deals are struck every day (think of prenuptial contracts, think of severance agreements) that involve payments for silence. When Cosby learned that Autumn had sent letters to Kodak and CBS saying she was his illegitimate daughter, he said he figured "it is basically the end of what I've been paying for." She had squandered her leverage and asked for too much. Her error in judgment seems as much tactical as moral.

And what about his error? When he called in the F.B.I., he had already decided that he was willing to have the story of his one-night stand become public. He had nothing more to lose. What did he gain from having Autumn Jackson arrested and prosecuted for extortion? Why did he make a federal case out of it? An entirely plausible, forgivable answer would be the awful coincidence of his son's murder. A father's judgment, in the middle of that nightmare, was flawed. Hacks call every unhappy story a tragedy, but for once the cliché fits. —KURT ANDERSEN

RAG TRADE

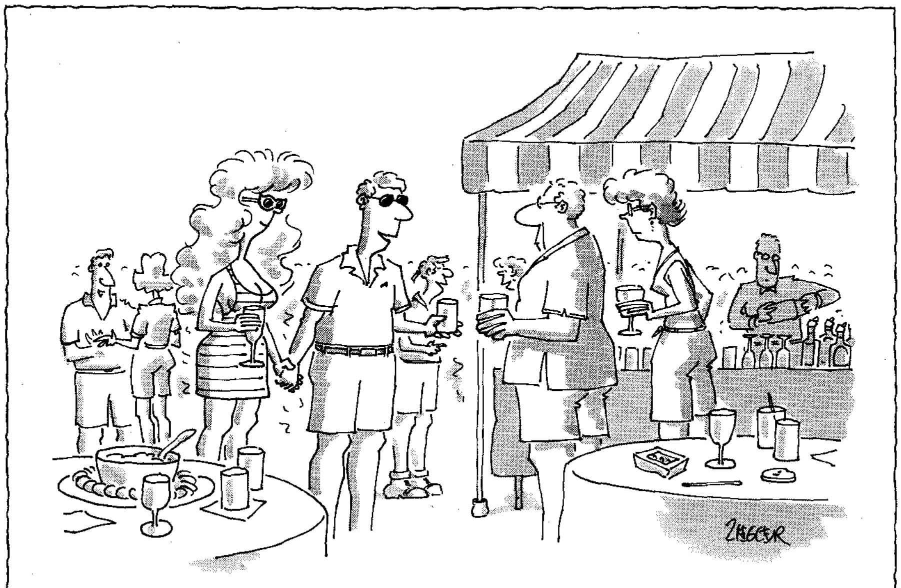
A memoir of one of the houses that Gianni Versace rebuilt.

THE ornate gates of Gianni Versace's house in Miami Beach were made of wrought iron, and they were tall, but they always seemed to me to be more like a sieve than a barricade. Tourists parked in front of the gates at all hours to take pictures of whoever might happen to exit: Sylvester Stallone or Sting would be thrilling, but even the FedEx man would do. Anyone leaving was plied with questions familiar to courtiers everywhere: Who's in there? Is he home?

The lavish South Beach Spanish-Mediterranean-style castle—which Versace bought for $2.95 million in 1992—had an eccentric past. It opened, in 1930, as an apartment complex called Casa Casuarina, with a penthouse for its owners, Alden Freeman and Charles Boulton. These two were bachelors of the mentor-and-protégé sort, a little like J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson. They had named the house in honor of Somerset Maugham, whose 1926 story collection had been called "The Casuarina Tree."

When Casa Casuarina opened, the Miami *Herald* blared, "APARTMENTS EMBODY HISTORY AND ROMANCE." The combination could easily serve as shorthand for Versace's own philosophy of design. But when he quoted the headline to me one evening, in the house's "media room," Gianni laughed. He knew, of course, that the *Herald* was referring to the fact that the original owners and their architect, Arthur Laidler-Jones, had attempted to re-create the oldest house in the Western Hemisphere: the Alcázar de Colón, in Santo Domingo, built by Christopher Columbus's son Diego. But the idea that a brand-new structure could be said to embody "history" struck him as absurdly, delightfully American. "Darling," he said with a laugh before we turned our attention to the E! channel that night, "the Colón itself was only built in 1510!"

—BRENDAN LEMON



"Meet Sally, the latest in my seemingly unending series of summer blockbusters."

THE POLITICAL LIFE

Is New Jersey's Governor perplexed by her pedigree?

AFTER all, she was a very well-bred girl, and when she first introduced herself to New Jersey voters she did it properly: *I'm Christine Todd Whitman, very nice to meet you.* The succession of "t"s suggested uprightness, firmness, backbone. Christine Todd Whitman. Two syllables, one syllable, two syllables, like Lyndon Baines Johnson. It was a name to be reckoned with, and it came with a pedigree. Her parents, the Todds, apart from being well-heeled denizens of what society columns invariably call "hunt country," were New Jersey Republican royalty. *You know the Todds, don't you?*

Mrs. Whitman has now been around the block. She's inevitably mentioned as a Vice-Presidential possibility in 2000. Sure, she's well known, but she's running for reëlection, and she still has to reintroduce herself to the voters. But that name. It's beginning to sound like Mrs. Thurston Howell III. Too patrician, too gentrified. No one uses the triple-decker moniker anymore. It's cumbersome, old-fashioned. (See Clare Boothe Luce, Helen Gahagan Douglas, but not Paula Corbin Jones, who lengthened her name for precisely the same reason Mrs. Whitman is shortening hers.)

There's a very simple remedy: the excision of one syllable and one consonant. Goodbye, Christine Todd Whitman, fox-hunting, tax-cutting, Talbots-wearing Rockefeller Republican; hello, Christie Whitman, soccer mom, to-the-split-level-born regular gal. Her new TV ads identify her simply as Christie Whitman. At the New Jersey Online Web site, you can click on Christie Watch and read how "Christie Whitman . . . became the first Jersey Girl to hold the state's highest office." At www.virtualcities.com, you can find Christie's recipes for raspberry chicken, fruit crisp, and her special spicy cornbread.

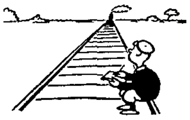
The history of American political diminutives is a short one. Honest Abe didn't call himself that. "When John F. Kennedy ran for President," the historian Michael Beschloss says, "he discouraged the use of Jack. He was always trying to seem older. He wouldn't even take his suit jacket off." But then in 1975 the ex-governor of a southern state asked the New Hampshire secretary of state to allow him to put his name on the Presidential primary ballot as Jimmy. The custom was to use only full Christian names. Jimmy won. The ex-governor of another Southern state has always been just plain Bill, except when he signs William J. on official documents.

Mrs. Whitman could perhaps go all the way with the J.F.K. route: C.T.W. But initials smack of monogrammed napkins and shirt cuffs and L. L. Bean bags with annoying calligraphy at the top. "The more interesting question is whether she is dropping Todd," the media scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson says. "Todd had a positive political association. But, remember, when women retain their maiden name that's a signal of a certain ideological commitment." That commitment is a feminist one. (Remember Hillary *Rodham* Clinton?) So, is Christie Whitman dropping Todd because she vetoed New Jersey's late-term abortion bill and she doesn't want to seem too, you know, feminist-liberal?

To be fair, Christine Todd Whitman has always been Christie to her family and friends. She worked the family farm. She loved horses. Good old Christie. Maybe she should just go the Cher-Iman-Madonna route and lose the other names altogether. President Christie? —RICHARD STENGEL

INK

A book party rides the rails in Penn Station.



A LONG-ACCUMULATED surplus of good will is probably the best explanation for how the Georgia 300, a sumptuous private railcar, wound up the other morning parked on Track 9 in Pennsylvania Station. The car, leased to Amtrak by its owner, a Florida undertaker, provided the setting for a brunch to celebrate the republication of the "greatly expanded edition" of "All Aboard with E. M. Frimbo," a book whose original publication, in 1974, was heralded by, of all things, a party aboard a private railcar in Pennsylvania Station.

The peregrinations of Ernest Malcolm Frimbo, the world's greatest railroad buff, were first recorded in the pages of this magazine in 1945, nineteen years after Rogers E. M. Whitaker, editor, writer, and Frimbo's alter ego, joined *The New Yorker*. During the sixties and seventies, Frimbo tales appeared with great frequency, the result of a collaboration between Whitaker and Tony Hiss, who had assumed the role of amanuensis and occasional travelling companion. Included in Frimbo's mileage total of 2,748,674.73 miles (Whitaker was a stickler for precision) was the journey his ashes made in July, 1981, two months after his death, en route to being scattered over a section of track in Cumbres Pass, Colorado, at the highest point in the United States still traversed by a narrow-gauge passenger railroad.

The gathering the other day was catered by John L. Haber, who wrote and directed the 1980 musical comedy "Frimbo"—still the only Off Broadway show ever staged in Grand Central Terminal. Also on hand was another Frimbo acolyte, Stanley Barriger, a former railroad man and now a travel agent from Claremont, New Hampshire. During the fifties, while working for the New York Central, Barriger shared bachelor quarters with Frimbo on Sutton Place. One of his favorite Frimbo rituals was riding the Twentieth Century Limited to Albany to get a haircut. "We'd leave from Grand Central at six o'clock and arrive in Albany by eight-forty-five, which allowed plenty of time for dinner in the diner—always a fine meal—and a haircut in the Century's barbershop," Barriger recalled. "In Albany, we'd go to the Railroad Y.M.C.A., where the crews slept, and read the bulletins posted there. At ten, we could board a sleeper back to Grand Central. We'd pull in before five, but you didn't have to get off until seven. If it wasn't for the Twentieth Century, I don't think Frimbo would have gotten his hair cut often enough. It was an expensive trim—but it wasn't the haircut he was going for." —Mark Singer

REQUIEM

A great ballerina's perfume is not easily forgotten.

ALEXANDRA DANILOVA retired from dancing before I could see her perform, but I did several times see her teach class. I thought that from watching her class I could divine some part of what she had been as a dancer, for I knew that in missing Danilova I had missed something really great.

Class with Danilova was instructive and enjoyable in many ways, but it was no substitute for performance. Even when she was teaching the theatricality of the Petipa variations, her demonstrations were little more than a wistful projection against the dead certainty that American girls were not interested in this box of secrets she wanted to share. To Danilova, it was a ballerina's job to be expressive and to make magic; for her, the neat fifth positions and cleanly executed pirouettes were meant to exude perfume—she called it that and looked for it—but the kids couldn't get the connection between perfume and technique; the most they could be was blankly charming. Danilova would mutter an aside in Russian to the pianist and drop the whole subject.

After she retired from teaching, in 1989, Danilova got to the theatre but seldom. Sometimes I would take her to a matinée. Once we went to an evening performance by a foreign company at the Met. The last ballet on the program was a novelty, unendurably preposterous, I knew from having already seen it; so, conscious of the lateness of the hour, I assured Choura that we could leave anytime she wished. She considered this for a moment, then said, "I think I should stay." Of course. Danilova was royalty, and royalty did not leave early. The preposterous ballet began, and three minutes later so did the walkouts. Lincoln Kirstein came storming up the aisle. Another three minutes. Choura leaned over and whispered, "It's a real lulu." But we stayed.

One Saturday afternoon, we were going to "The Sleeping Beauty," her favorite ballet. Danilova's apartment building was a five-minute taxi ride to Lincoln Center, but she asked to be picked up a half hour early, because she walked with difficulty. Besides, royalty was never late. I set out in what should have been plenty of time, but that was the day they decided to dig up Sixth Avenue, and by the time my taxi pulled up to her building she had been sitting downstairs for twenty minutes. Royalty must not be kept waiting. I rushed into the lobby to find her sitting calmly, even demurely, perfectly dressed and made up as usual, with her cane and Tanya, her helper, by her side. We were perilously close to curtain time, but Choura only looked at me, her wide blue eyes getting wider as I poured out breathless apologies and excuses. "Oh, oh, oh, but how *tair*rible, you must have been so *nair*vous," said Choura.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

She died last week at the age of ninety-three. I will always regret not having seen her Sugar Plum Fairy, her Swanilda, her Myrtha, her Glove Seller, her Sleepwalker, and all the rest, but that afternoon I had, I think, my truest glimpse of the Danilova who danced. —Arlene Croce

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OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

THE D.A.'S DILEMMA

Robert Morgenthau is famously uncompromising, but will the murder of Jonathan Levin force him to seek the death penalty for the first time?

BY JAMES TRAUB

ROBERT MORGENTHAU, Manhattan's ageless District Attorney, is widely regarded as a man of principle, a subtle politician, and a crafty operator. All these qualities have been in evidence for the past two years, during which he has held New York State's death-penalty law at bay. In February of 1995, as the law was being debated in Albany, he wrote a piece for the *Times* Op-Ed page denouncing capital punishment as "a mirage that distracts society from more fruitful, less facile answers" to crime. When the State Legislature went ahead and passed the bill, the Bronx D.A., Robert Johnson, declared that he would not seek the death penalty, and before long was engulfed in an angry confrontation with Governor George Pataki. Brooklyn's D.A., Charles Hynes, who had said that he shared Morgenthau's views, nevertheless prepared aggressively and almost gleefully for the new law, and was roundly denounced for hypocrisy by the defense bar. Morgenthau, meanwhile, said that he would enforce the will of the people but privately did as little as possible to actually prepare a death-penalty case; and he escaped criticism altogether, as he almost always does. It probably doesn't hurt that Morgenthau, a lifelong Democrat, has assiduously cultivated relations with both Pataki and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

But Morgenthau may have finally run out of maneuvering room. In early June, Jonathan Levin, a beloved high-school teacher in the Bronx who was the son of the Time Warner chairman Gerald Levin, was tortured and murdered in his Manhattan apartment, allegedly by a former student, Corey Arthur, with an accomplice, both of whom have pleaded not guilty. People in Morgenthau's office agree that the Levin murder, which showed strong elements of premeditation, is a natural death-penalty case. The Mayor and the Governor have called for a capital indictment, and they are unlikely to withhold criticism this time; in fact, Pataki has threatened to supersede Morgenthau on the matter, as he did last year with the Bronx D.A. The Levin murder may prove to be the case that traps Morgenthau between his flinty integrity and his political realism. "I have an elevated view of Morgenthau," one defense lawyer says, "but I have to remind myself that you don't get to be where he is, and stay where he is, without being willing to do what has to be done at nut-crunching time."

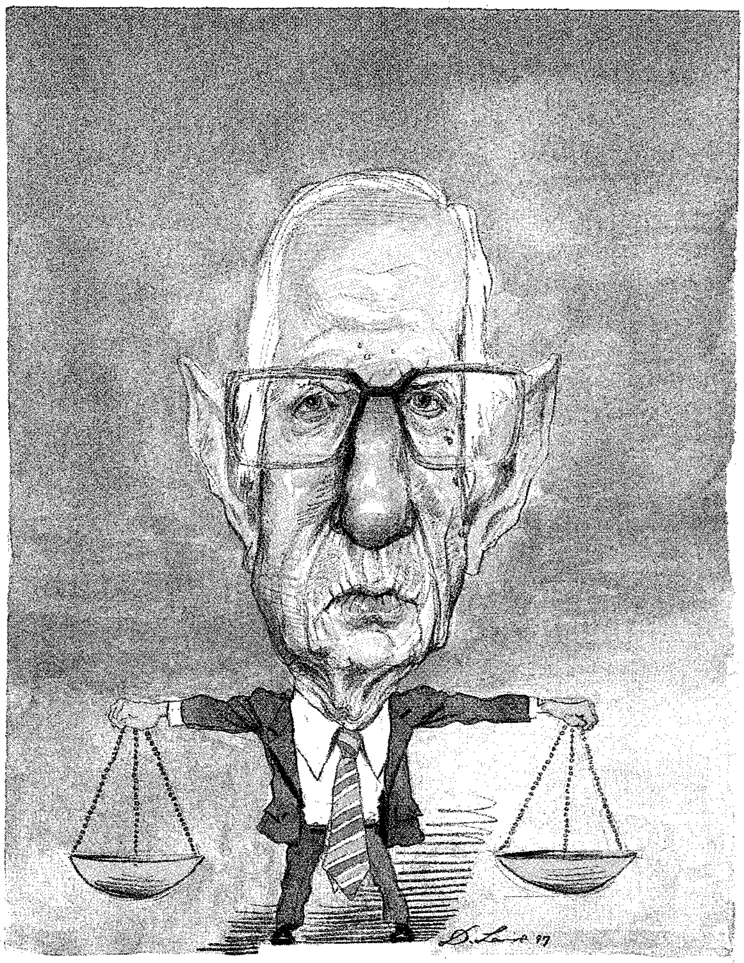
Just before I went to visit Morgenthau not long ago, the Queens D.A., Richard Brown, had announced that he would seek the death penalty for the first time, and so had Mary Jo White, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. When I asked Morgenthau if he felt that his own position was becoming increasingly lonely, he squinted at me as if he were trying to make out what on earth I had in mind. Then he stared off into space for the longest time. Morgenthau is a man who speaks slowly; on occasion, he simply trails off into an excruciating pause. Finally, he said, in a basso rumble, "I don't really worry about whether I'm lonely or not lonely." He would, he added, decide the Levin case on the merits.

Earlier, Morgenthau had recalled a magazine article in which the Philadelphia D.A., Lynne Abraham, proudly declared that she had sought the death penalty in virtually every eligible case. "In 1990," Morgenthau said, referring to the year before Abraham took office, "Philadelphia and New York County, which have almost identical populations, had an identical number of homicides. In 1996, she had four hundred and fourteen, and we had two hundred." His position, in short, hadn't changed: the death penalty was still ineffective, no matter how popular it was becoming. The therapeutic argument for capital punishment—that it affords the victim's survivors a sense of closure and society a measure of vengeance—would certainly have struck Morgenthau as mumbo-jumbo. He did say about the Levin case, however, that he was waiting to hear from the victim's family. Their feelings about the death penalty would clearly have a powerful influence on public opinion, but Morgenthau wasn't about to say so. It was still entirely possible that Morgenthau would seek the death penalty this time; but he had prepared the ground so thoroughly that if he did so almost no one would see it as an act of expedience.

ROBERT MORGENTHAU turns seventy-eight this month, and is often described as an incarnation of New York history. No living figure has occupied a dominant position in the city's public life for as long as he has: he served as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York from 1961 to 1970, and then became D.A. after a five-year hiatus. Morgenthau even looks like Roman statuary: he has great, gaunt cheeks, a broad, high brow, and the famous Morgenthau nose, sharply bent at the bridge and hooked at the tip. His walk is a slow shuffle, and when he listens he keeps his left ear cocked toward you, because the right ear is deaf—the result of a childhood mastoid infection and the booming of the big guns during four and a half years of Navy service in the Second World War. People who know Morgenthau are accustomed to seeing him preside over meetings silently and cryptically.

Still, few doubt his enduring power. He has his critics, but almost all of them consider public disparagement an act of madness: they fear his unflagging memory, and they attribute to him a control over the criminal-justice system which verges on omnipotence. They recognize in him a past-master of the back channel, the quiet deal, the unspoken threat. What people inside the worlds of politics and criminal justice say about Morgenthau is that he always gets his way. A former top aide explains how it is that the D.A. continues, year after year, to preserve a formula for distributing funds to the city's prosecutors which favors his own office: "Morgenthau is smarter, he's more competent, the money is better spent, but he also understands how to do it. He doesn't kick people in the teeth. Rudy Giuliani was his mortal enemy, but this guy is ultimately a pragmatist. And he'll meet with Rudy, and he'll have his people at the budget meeting all night, and he'll talk with Peter Vallone"—the speaker of the City Council—"and Vallone's son will come to the D.A.'s office. No one understands what a great politician he is."

DAVID LEVINE



Morgenthau inherited the family's patrician code—disdain for showiness, contempt for self-dealing, and a sense of high moral purpose.

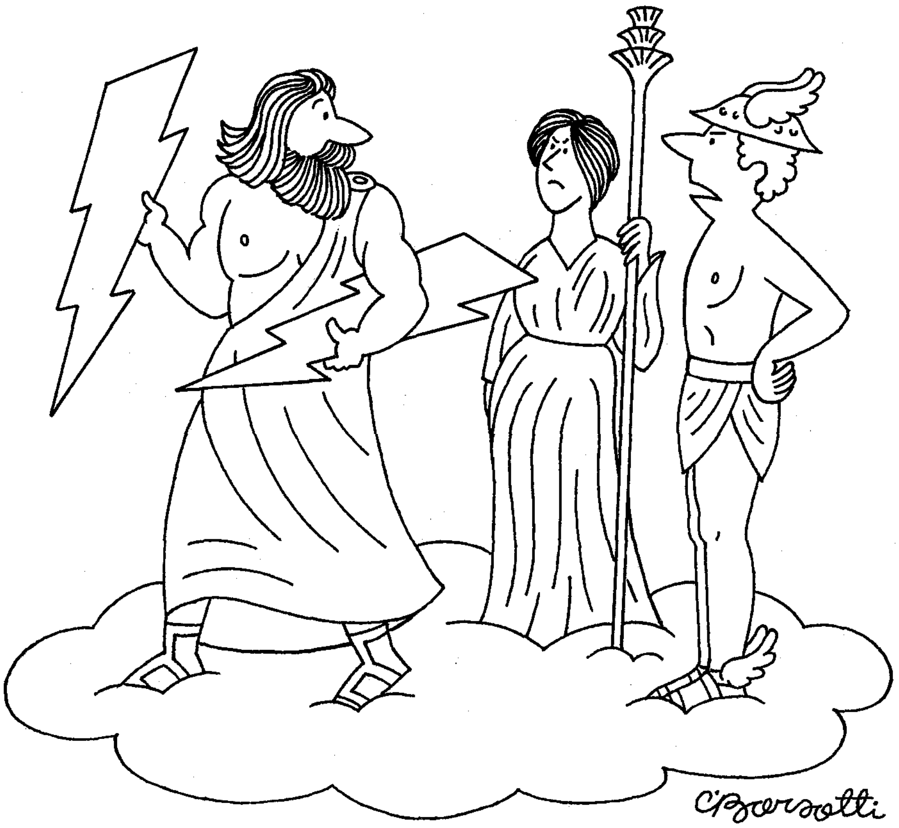
Unlike other powerful men, Morgenthau gives the impression that he does nothing whatsoever. He sits in a corner of a vast office lined with photographs of Navy ships and of Kennedys and Roosevelts. Piles of paper totter on his desk, on chairs, and on window ledges; old messages molder on spikes. Two secretaries—faithful retainers—flit softly through a dingy suite of outer rooms. And the Boss, as he is known to one and all, slowly sips a Diet Pepsi, takes an occasional pull on a stogie, and makes phone calls. The calls can be interminable. Morgenthau has a way of winding down without ever quite ending, so you never know whether the time has come to hang up—and one does not hang up on Robert Morgenthau. Practically everyone who has ever dealt with him has experienced his slow-dripping relentlessness. When he wants funding for a program, former Mayor Edward Koch says, "he's on the phone to you all day long, and he calls everyone."

And Morgenthau knows everyone. One day I heard him enlist Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve, as co-chairman of a dinner for the New York Holocaust museum. He also persuaded Henry Kissinger to serve as the guest of honor. An hour later, a call came in from a high-ranking Justice Department official. Morgenthau had just issued a super major case targeting the carting industry, and the official, an old pal, was calling both to congratulate the D.A. and to tease him for making a case that the Feds probably should have made. Morgenthau teased him back by listing all the federal buildings mentioned in the indictment. "We haven't figured out how to do any indictments in Washington, but we're working on it," he said with a cackle. Cupping his hand over the receiver, Morgenthau cracked a lopsided grin and said to me, "As you may gather, I'm giving him the finger."

Morgenthau and Gerald Levin, it turns out, have known each other for some time: Time Warner gives generously to the Police Athletic League, which Morgenthau began serving as president in 1962—he is now chairman—and Levin sits on the board of the Holocaust museum, which Morgenthau also chairs. Morgenthau has spoken about half a dozen times to a friend who is close to Levin, and this intermediary has conveyed the impression that Levin "doesn't have a conclusion at this point" about whether he wants the D.A.'s office to seek capital punishment for the killer of his son.

ONE reason Morgenthau can spend so many hours schmoozing is that he has built a vigorous and effective prosecutorial machine. The Manhattan D.A.'s office is the largest in the city, with five hundred and fifty assistants and eighty full-time investigators. It is noted for the stream of celebrities' children who pass through its doors: they include the sons of Dan Rather, Alfonse D'Amato, and Cyrus Vance and, famously, John F. Kennedy, Jr. Morgenthau has also been able to attract the kind of pedigreed young attorneys who would not normally dream of working for a local prosecutor. There is probably no prosecutorial jurisdiction in the country whose investigative capacity rivals the Manhattan D.A.'s. One of Morgenthau's favorite statistics is that last year his office was responsible for more wiretaps than all the federal offices in the state put together. And it makes a difference: in Morgenthau's tenure as D.A., his office has closed down dozens of major drug rings and has broken the Mob's hold on the trucking industry in the Garment District and on several of the building-trades locals: big, ambitious cases that, like the carting case, one might expect would be brought by federal prosecutors.

Nothing demonstrates Morgenthau's continuing vitality—and reach—so powerfully as the prosecution of the carting industry, which is now under way in the Manhattan courtroom of Judge Leslie Crocker Snyder. The garbage case, as it is known around the D.A.'s office, constitutes the most important legal assault on Mafia control over an industry in New York since Rudolph Giuliani, then the United States Attorney, dismantled the construction cartel in 1986. It is Morgenthau's magnum opus. The investigation lasted seven years; at its peak, the office was running three undercover operations simultaneously. Two years ago, a grand jury handed up an indictment charging seventeen individuals, twenty-three companies, and four trade associations with conspiring to fix prices and allocate routes, and using threats and violence to enforce their control. Last fall, a second grand jury indicted twelve more defendants and seven companies. They will be tried later, but earlier this year Morgenthau won guilty pleas from fifteen of the companies, one of the trade associations, and eleven of the defendants. Nine of them will be doing jail time; the fines in the case total fifteen million dollars.



"It's called monotheism, but it looks like downsizing to me."

Yet what makes Morgenthau's office the most famous prosecutorial jurisdiction in the United States is not the big white-collar cases, or even the Mob cases, but the sensational crimes that Manhattan so dependably produces. During Morgenthau's tenure, his assistants have prosecuted the "preppy killer," Robert Chambers; the "subway vigilante," Bernhard Goetz; and the teen-agers who, in the midst of a "wilding" spree, attacked a Central Park jogger. In the last few months alone, the city has been shocked by the Levin killing, the murder of a policeman by a luckless stockbroker trying to rob his own father, and the stabbing death and disembowelment of a man in Central Park, allegedly by two fifteen-year-olds, who have pleaded not guilty.

Yet Morgenthau, who will talk at great length about a securities-fraud case, is palpably uncomfortable with this world of senseless violence. After we had talked about the Levin case, I asked him if he was ever struck by the savagery that sometimes breaks out in the city.

"Yeah, yeah." Morgenthau looked down at his hands. Then he quickly began to tell me how his office really deserved credit for a recent federal drug case.

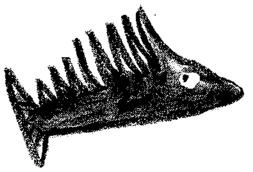
MORGENTHAU'S style of leadership cannot be separated from his lineage, and not many D.A.s *have* a lineage. His grandfather Henry Morgenthau emigrated from Germany and made a fortune in real estate around the beginning of the century. (He helped his old friend Adolph Ochs negotiate the purchase of the land on which the headquarters of the *Times* was built, cementing a dynastic alliance that has lasted to this day.) The Morgenthaus were one of those supremely high-minded German-Jewish families who thought of politics as public service, and they engaged in it at the highest levels. Henry used his wealth and position to support Woodrow Wilson; Wilson named him to the traditionally Jewish post of Ambassador to Turkey, which was then Palestine's colonial master. Henry, Jr., served for nearly twelve years as Franklin D. Roosevelt's Treasury Secretary.

Robert Morgenthau inherited the family's patrician code—disdain for showiness, contempt for self-dealing, and a sense of high moral purpose. He also inherited something of the family temperament. Henry, Jr., was a distant and often gloomy character, happiest when he was busying himself with chores at the family orchard in Dutchess County. Morgenthau himself is a sunnier and a saltier person, but he has a good deal of his father's plainness and reticence and Yankee astringency. He winced whenever I mentioned "Mostly Morgenthaus," a family history written by his elder brother Henry III. "I wouldn't have written such an honest book," he once muttered, and he didn't mean it as a rave review. Trying to get Morgenthau to reflect on his life, or to talk about his feelings, is a waste of time; he is built along strictly functional lines.

Like his father, Morgenthau spends virtually every weekend at the orchard, known as Fishkill Farms, and doing so provides him with a ready-made excuse for avoiding unwanted socializing. When I visited him there one day late last fall, I found him sitting in a dimly lit storage area behind the farm store with his six-year-old daughter, Amy, whom he was trying to shoo off a scale. He was wearing three or four layers of shirts, ancient khakis, and black rubber shoes. The only piece of urban paraphernalia on him was a black cap that said "Redrum"—a gift from some Drug Enforcement Administration people.

Morgenthau drove me along a winding road, past apple trees, to his house. We stood out on the lawn while he threw a tennis ball for his mutt, Clyde. Morgenthau pointed down a slope. "We were living down there in a mobile home for a few years," he said, wresting the ball from Clyde's teeth. "My grown children were completely embarrassed. I kind of liked it myself." When we went inside for a lunch of toasted bialys and smoked salmon, Morgenthau dutifully showed me the family heirlooms: here were the wooden boxes from Eleanor's workshop; here was the poem Franklin wrote about Henry, Jr. As a young man, Morgenthau had grilled hot dogs for the King and Queen of England, and mixed up some mint juleps for Winston Churchill. "That's when I figured out that Churchill was kind of a faker," Morgenthau said. "He barely touched his mint julep, and he never even lighted his cigar." Morgenthau is, a friend says, "in awe of no man."

Apart from his upbringing, the shaping force of his young life was his war service. Morgenthau enlisted in the Navy as a junior in college, in 1940. By 1943, he was a lieutenant. Morgenthau's second ship, the Lansdale, was sunk in the Mediterranean that year, and forty-seven of the two hundred and eighty-one men were lost; he floated around in the sea for three or four terrifying hours before he was picked up. His third ship survived a torpedo that went through the bow. He once said to me, "I learned a lot in the Navy. At twenty-three and a half, I was made the executive officer of a ship with three hundred men. You had to learn how to handle disciplinary matters: you couldn't be considered a patsy, but you also couldn't go to extremes. You had to learn how to bring out the best in people."



Morgenthau's great-uncle Herbert Lehman had been governor of New York, succeeding F.D.R., and after the war Morgenthau hoped to have a similar career. He graduated from Yale Law School, and, as a lawyer at Patterson, Belknap & Webb, he joined the New York Young Democrats, a group of idealistic élitists dedicated to challenging the old machine. But he also joined the "regular" Democratic club—the machine's club—in his Bronx neighborhood. He has always relished the roguish side of politics, and he still has a soft spot for the behind-the-scenes guys, including some he has put away. When I asked him once about Carmine DeSapio, the Tammany Hall chief whom he convicted on bribery charges in 1969, his eyes lit up, and he said, "I saw Carmine the other night at Gallagher's. He was very friendly."

Morgenthau was a figure for the Kennedy era—an aristocrat with a dauntless sense of moral purpose. When John Kennedy, an old family friend, ran for President, Byron White, a chum of Morgenthau's from law school, who was the head of Citizens for Kennedy (and later became a Supreme Court justice), asked Morgenthau to run the volunteer effort in the Bronx. Morgenthau threw himself into the campaign, and White urged the new President to nominate Morgenthau as the United States Attorney for the Southern District. J.F.K. agreed.

The following year, however, Morgenthau quit his job to run for governor of New York against Nelson Rockefeller. Morgenthau proved to be a master at lining up the chits, but he was a dreadful campaigner, with none of Rocky's ebullience. Morgenthau lost by half a million votes, after which Kennedy reappointed him to his old job. Most of Morgenthau's predecessors had been respectable Wall Street figures who generally took whatever investigations came their way from the F.B.I. or the Securities and Exchange Commission. Morgenthau transformed the office's culture by making cases of his own. He began to go after the rampant stock fraud that was a by-product of the hot new markets; he made major tax cases; he pierced the secrecy of Swiss banks, and in doing so he succeeded in pushing major legislation that forced increased disclosure by banks. When his former assistants talk about those years, they get a far-off look in their eyes. "All of us who served under Bob idolized him," said the late Arthur Liman, who served as counsel to the Senate Iran-Contra Committee. They admired him not only as a bold leader but as a brilliant investigator with a staggering recall for facts.

Some of his most famous targets were powerful Democrats. He convicted DeSapio as part of a larger case he made against the New York City water commissioner James Marcus. In 1963, he charged James Landis, a former dean of Harvard Law School and a Kennedy friend, with failing to file federal income-tax returns for five years. The case could easily have been handled civilly, one of his former assistants says, but Morgenthau insisted on an indictment. Morgenthau also had an Ahab-like fixation on Roy Cohn—the lawyer and fixer and friend of cardinals and mafiosi and J. Edgar Hoover—which spanned his tenure as United States Attorney. Morgenthau indicted Cohn in 1963 on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. The case ended in a mistrial when a juror had to be excused. The next time around, Cohn was found not guilty. Morgenthau indicted and tried Cohn again, in 1969, on charges of bribing a city-appointed appraiser; this time a jury acquitted him in six hours. Stephen Kaufman, a former assistant United States Attorney under Morgenthau, and a close friend, says that Morgenthau is not a vindictive man, but he acknowledges Morgenthau's habit of obsessive pursuit. "He's probably most vulnerable on Roy Cohn," Kaufman says.

Morgenthau's supreme faith in himself and in his mission has made him an incredibly stubborn adversary. In 1969, after Richard M. Nixon was elected President, Justice Department officials called on Morgenthau to step down to make way for a Republican appointee, as was the custom in such matters. Morgenthau refused; he was in the middle of important investigations, he said. He had also been, he told me, investigating Nixon himself. "I always thought he had Swiss bank accounts," Morgenthau said—an extraordinary charge that appears in none of the major Nixon biographies. When Morgenthau refused to leave his post, the Justice Department held up appointments of new assistants; and when, in December, 1969, nearly a year after taking office, Nixon named Whitney North Seymour, Jr., as a successor to Morgenthau, Morgenthau's response was "My staff and I intend to pursue our work." Morgenthau consulted a former assistant, Abraham Sofaer, who confirmed that Nixon had the right to remove him. Still, he held on for a few more weeks before agreeing to step down.

Morgenthau must wonder about what might have been. On November 22, 1963, he had gone out to Hickory Hill, Robert Kennedy's place in Virginia, to have lunch with Bobby and Ethel. "We were sitting out at the pool eating clam chowder," Morgenthau recalls. "I guess we were just getting to the tuna-fish sandwiches. Simultaneously, the phone rang and he went for the phone, and a housepainter said to me, 'The President has been shot.' I saw Kennedy put his hand to his mouth and say, 'Jack's been shot in Dallas.' " There had been rumors not long before that Robert would leave the government to run Jack's next campaign, and that Morgenthau would be nominated for Attorney General. Kennedy's assassination—and then Robert's—prevented Morgenthau from being the third in his family to occupy a prominent national position.

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With a smile like daybreak,

You swim into my life only at night,
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And the broken sweep of light
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You ride the storms and calms,
You plunge and surf,
Cruise the depths with sharks and stingrays,
And flicker through the feet of children
Paddling in the shallows,

To end up here in the dark between the sheets,
In the gap between dreaming and waking,
Coming ashore with your smile,
Your sea scent and thrashing tail,
Still slippery from the creation.

—A. Alvarez

Once Morgenthau had stepped down as United States Attorney, he didn't know quite what to do with himself. After another, aborted, run for governor, he rented a little office and became, Stephen Kaufman says, "the only practicing lawyer with an unpublished number." In 1972, Morgenthau's wife, Martha Pattridge, whom he had met while they were both in college, died, of cancer. He was left with five children, the youngest of them only ten. Morgenthau refers to this painful period of his life only tangentially, in order to explain, for example, why he put aside his political ambitions.

Five years later, at age fifty-eight, he married a thirty-year-old journalist, Lucinda Franks. ("He dated just about every eligible female journalist in town," Franks says.) Morgenthau now has a second family, consisting of Amy, the six-year-old, and Josh, who is thirteen. While I was with him in the office one morning, Morgenthau was arranging the father-daughter breakfast at Amy's school. Something almost childlike remains in Morgenthau. The novelist Joyce Carol Oates, a good friend, recalls going to a play where Morgenthau laughed out loud at parts that the rest of the audience was gravely mulling over.

In 1974, Frank Hogan, a legendary figure who had been the Manhattan D.A. since 1942, died shortly after leaving office, and Morgenthau, after some persuading from friends and legal figures, agreed to run in a special election. He won handily, and then found that he had inherited a prosecutorial sacred monster. "When I came in," he recalls, "there was one detective-investigator on the staff, and he spent most of his time making coffee." Telephones were considered a luxury item. Morgenthau spent much of his first decade as D.A. raising money and reorganizing the office; as he had done when he was a United States Attorney, he allowed even junior assistants to try their own cases—a system that has been widely copied.

Morgenthau is no great shakes as a litigator. He has never tried a case, and he appears to have little interest in legal theory. His gifts are for leadership and organization. His peculiar management style very likely owes something to his

Navy experience and something to his almost eerily stoical temperament. Paul Grand, who worked under Morgenthau as an assistant United States Attorney and later married Morgenthau's daughter Anne, observes, "Annie says that as a child she knew her father was angry only if she watched his eyebrows. He's very muted emotionally. You don't see anger or depression—a good chuckle you can get." Morgenthau's self-control is tremendously reassuring to the people around him. As head of the Sex Crimes Unit, Linda Fairstein regularly handles cases of the kind that provoke media frenzies, such as the Robert Chambers trial, but, she says, "The only instructions I've ever had from him—in the toughest calls that are going to reflect on him, not me—were 'Do the right thing.' " Many of his top aides have, like Fairstein, remained in the office throughout his tenure, though they could be earning a lot more money elsewhere.

Morgenthau's underreactive style served him well when his honeymoon with the public came to a crashing end. In 1984, Bernhard Goetz was arrested after shooting four young black men on a subway train. When a grand jury refused to hand up an indictment for attempted murder, Morgenthau was sharply criticized in the black community; when he called a second grand jury, which returned the desired indictment, Goetz's defenders accused the prosecutor of caving in to black rage. In the subsequent trial, a jury convicted Goetz only on an unlicensed-weapon charge, thus making Morgenthau look as if he had overreached in order to placate critics. Perhaps he hadn't, but the racial dynamic of that era had clearly taken him by surprise. Morgenthau says he fully understood the fury that the case had ignited only when he gave a speech at a community meeting soon afterward. "These two nice old ladies came up to me," he recalls, "and said that they supported me and so forth. And I said, 'What did you think about the Goetz case?' And one of them said, 'He should have shot 'em in the head—all four of them.' "

MORGENTHAU was sixty-six in 1985, and a rugged, tennis-playing sixty-six at that; but for the first time press accounts began to call attention to his age and energy level. There was an-

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What are the facts?

A Bizarre Concept. The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria, which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police."

Many Sacrifices for Peace. In order to achieve peace with its neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. He is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except for Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Fortunately, under the current Israeli government such a surrender is not in the cards.

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of it "chairman" Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by its previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!)—and has equipped this "police force' with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

The Arab countries, not Israel, are killing peace in the Middle East. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices for peace. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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other prosecutor in town who reminded people of the young Bob Morgenthau—United States Attorney Rudy Giuliani. One former high-ranking assistant recalls, "Every case that we're investigating and putting resources into goes to the Southern District. Rudy keeps winning. By the mid-eighties, it's the United States Attorney who is fighting the Mob, fighting political corruption, doing all the white-collar things. It's hurting the applicant pool—it's hurting resources. And Bob Morgenthau *hates* it."

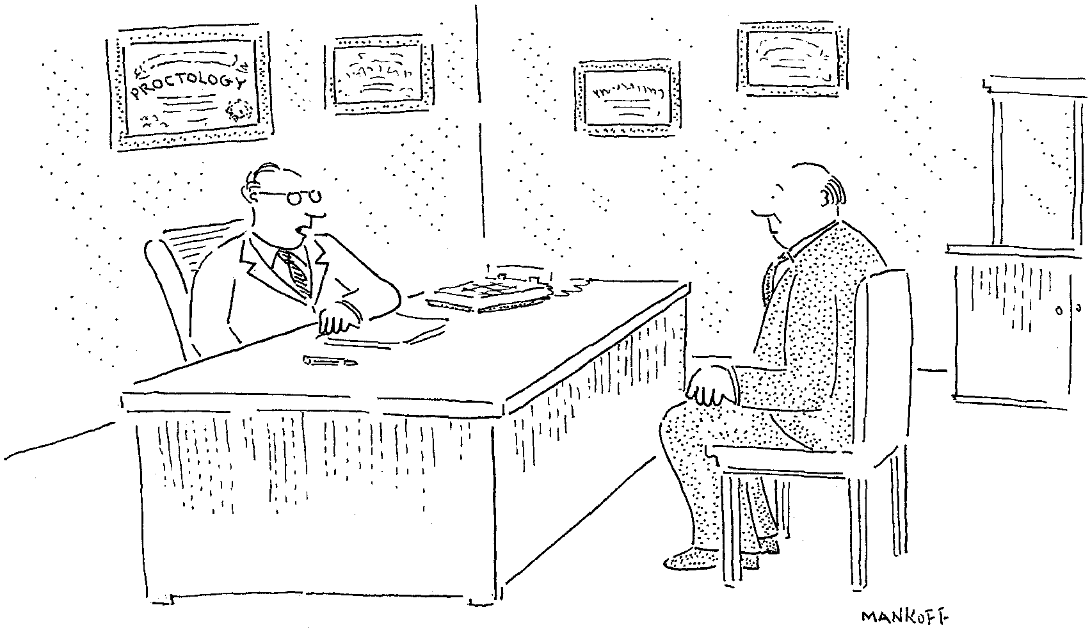
Another D.A. might have deferred to the United States Attorney, but Morgenthau, for all his courtly demeanor, is a turf warrior. Open warfare between the two prosecutors broke out in early 1986, when both offices began pursuing a series of scandals in the New York City government. When the Feds persuaded a key witness to coöperate, Morgenthau had him served with a subpoena as he exited from his arraignment in federal court. Morgenthau was the first to indict the Bronx Democratic boss Stanley Friedman, but then Giuliani did the same. A federal judge awarded the case to Giuliani.

That loss had a galvanic effect on Morgenthau. Giuliani's string of victories crystallized a feeling that the D.A.'s investigation division—and, above all, the vaunted Rackets Bureau—had lagged behind the rest of the office. They weren't making cases—Morgenthau's trademark. The head of Rackets, Morgenthau says, "just sat on his ass." Morgenthau replaced him with Michael Cherkasky, and told him, "I can't prosecute up Park Avenue"—meaning Harlem—"if I don't prosecute down Park Avenue." He shook two and a half million dollars out of the state for a new labor-racketeering bureau, and he quadrupled the number of investigators.

Very quickly, the new bureau began to produce major cases. After a series of undercover investigations, the office won convictions or guilty pleas against the officers of the painters, plumbers, and carpenters union. In 1987, Morgenthau indicted an old acquaintance, the State Senate minority leader, Manfred Ohrenstein, for putting campaign aides on the state payroll. (The case was thrown out on appeal.) Two years later, he won a perjury conviction against one of Ed Koch's aides. In 1992, Morgenthau brought a highly unusual antitrust case against the organized-crime figures Tommy and Joseph Gambino, charging them with illegally controlling the trucking business in the Garment District. The Gambinos pleaded guilty, agreed to relinquish their hold over the industry, and paid a twelve-million-dollar fine. That fine was used to bring new trucking companies into the area.

Great prosecutors have to be propelled by a sense of outrage and at the same time recognize the limits of their own impassioned judgment. Giuliani was often criticized as United States Attorney for going after defendants simply because they seemed to offend his sense of right. Morgenthau is said to have abhorred Giuliani's sensationalist tactics, but the difference between them may be mostly a matter of style. Morgenthau doesn't show anger, as Giuliani does, but he has a tenacity that makes it almost impossible to pry him loose once he bites down on something. Powerful people who behave self-servingly have a way of triggering that impulse. It happened with Roy Cohn and with Nixon; it happened again, in the late eighties, with the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, the infamous Pakistan-based bank that was funding terrorism and drug trafficking all over the world. Federal prosecutors, wary of the cosmic scope of the case and restrained by State Department officials fearful of offending our allies in the Gulf, declined to take on the bank. That, however, was exactly what appealed to Morgenthau. He devoted huge resources to the case. And he himself spent countless hours hunting down leads all over the world, berating recalcitrant Justice Department officials, and approving subpoenas for high-ranking officials of foreign governments.

In the fall of 1991, Morgenthau filed a broad indictment charging B.C.C.I. and its principals with bribing bankers and regulators in ten countries; but the major figures proved elusive, as other prosecutors might well have predicted. Then he went after Clark Clifford, B.C.C.I.'s chief American lawyer, who had been a Secretary of Defense under Lyndon Johnson and was one of the grand seigneurs of Washington. Morgenthau's chief aides told him that it was a mistake to indict Clifford, but he went ahead, charging Clifford and his law



"And no more thongs for you this summer."

partner Robert Altman with taking bribes from B.C.C.I. to conceal its ownership of an American bank. The D.A. turned suddenly vehement when I asked about Clifford. "He had nineteen million on deposit in two banks here in New York," Morgenthau said. "There's all this story about this longtime public servant. His total number of years of public service, including the Navy, was *four and a half years*." (By some reckoning, the number is larger.) It was as if the man were a traitor to their shared class. Clifford was ultimately severed from the trial for medical reasons, and the jury found the evidence against Altman so weak that several jurors shook his hand after the not-guilty verdict was announced. It was a humiliating defeat for Morgenthau, and I asked him if he felt any regret about the decision. He shook his head and said, "I tend to think when they're past, they're past."

Morgenthau protects his office's prerogatives, its budget, even its physical space, with the same zeal he brings to his cases. He can be relentless, but he can also be quite diplomatic when it suits his purpose. Whatever his private feelings, he has in recent years developed an excellent relationship with Mayor Giuliani. At lunch one day at Forlini's, a restaurant behind the courthouse which he has been frequenting for thirty-five years, I asked about the former Police Commissioner William Bratton, who'd been forced out by Giuliani, and Morgenthau surprised me by saying, "I urged the Mayor to get rid of him." Morgenthau has a low regard for people who can't hold their tongue in public; Bratton shouldn't have been making such a public spectacle of himself, Morgenthau said, and, above all, he shouldn't have let the world know that he was trolling for a high-paying job in the private sector. When I called the Mayor, he did not contradict Morgenthau's account, and he also played down the combat of former years, saying, "Except for that interim when we occupied different jurisdictions, we've always had an excellent relationship."

So great is Morgenthau's authority throughout the world of criminal justice that it's hard to say where, if anywhere, its limits lie. It is said, for instance, that criminal-court judges are afraid of him. "You go into Manhattan," one highly experienced defense lawyer told me. "In the tough cases and the tough calls, you have to overcome the 'What will Bob Morgenthau do to me?' factor with judges." What *could* Morgenthau do to them? He could use his influence with the city's chief administrative judge to have them transferred to the inhospitable climes of the Bronx, or to civil court. This defense lawyer has a list of half a dozen judges, all considered relatively sympathetic to the defense, who have been transferred. There's a perception, he went on to say, that judges who cross Morgenthau pay the price. Morgenthau ridicules the idea, saying, "I never suggested to the court administration that somebody be moved." Even Morgenthau's own current and former top aides don't know where the truth lies. It almost doesn't matter; it's the belief that governs people's behavior.

ROBERT MORGENTHAU'S reputation as an old-fashioned liberal has a great deal to do with his steadfast opposition to capital punishment, but his approach to the criminal-justice system defies labels. Public defenders consider Morgenthau an extremely tough prosecutor. David Feige, an attorney with the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, says, "I spent four years in Brooklyn, and I was actually quite shocked at what goes on in Manhattan. There are lots of auto-stripping-type cases"—stealing a radio, for example—"that are prosecuted as felonies in Manhattan and are treated as misdemeanors in Brooklyn." Morgenthau makes no apologies for such differences. "Fifty per cent of the people who are arrested in Manhattan don't live here," he explains. "So I always felt that we had to be as tough or tougher than any surrounding area, or else more people would be coming in to Manhattan to commit crimes."

Morgenthau is highly competitive when it comes to taking credit for reducing crime. He cannot bear it that Giuliani and the police get all the credit for crime-rate reductions, and he is forever writing letters to the editor, and buttonholing reporters, on the subject of his anticrime programs. Crime has fallen further in Manhattan than in the three other large boroughs, and at current rates there will be fewer murders in Manhattan in 1997 than in any year since 1951—an amazing statistic. The projected rates for the city as a whole will be the lowest since 1966.

"I think the major reason," Morgenthau said to me, "is our concentration on drug gangs and on the young, active criminals, who commit a disproportionate share of the violent crimes." Robert Silbering, New York City's special narcotics prosecutor, agrees that Morgenthau deserves much of the credit for the decrease in Manhattan's violent-crime rate. "I don't think there's any other office that has come close to knocking out those types of entrenched street gangs," he says. Mayor Giuliani is less willing to make that concession. He does, however, praise Morgenthau for "making sure people go to state prison."

MY last conversation with Morgenthau became a series of painful silences as I asked him to reflect on changes in race relations, juvenile crime, and the tenor of life in Manhattan during his more than thirty years in office. Morgenthau, though, talked about what he wanted to talk about, which was international financial crime. Ever since B.C.C.I., foreign governments have taken to approaching him as if he were a sort of roving global prosecutor, a job that Morgenthau is delighted to perform. In February, his office won convictions against three Venezuelans who had defrauded investors in a Puerto Rican bank of fifty-three million dollars. Scotland Yard had just called about a money-laundering case. All this has given Morgenthau an increasingly epic sense of his jurisdiction. "If this is going to be the financial center of the United States and the world, you've got to have an open marketplace," he said.

New Yorkers are far more strongly gripped by close-at-hand horrors, such as the murder of Jonathan Levin, than by disturbances in the international banking system. But when it comes to public outrage Morgenthau remains within the protective armor of his values and principles. Earlier this year, he had received a call from an editorial writer at one of the tabloids—the paper had been attacking him—and given him the brushoff. "I'm not going to talk about it," he recalled saying, "because you people aren't interested in the facts. You've already made up your mind." Morgenthau wasn't angry; he was grinning. The newspaper's own reporters, he explained to me, had told him that they were on his side. That round, like so many other rounds, went to Bob Morgenthau. ♦

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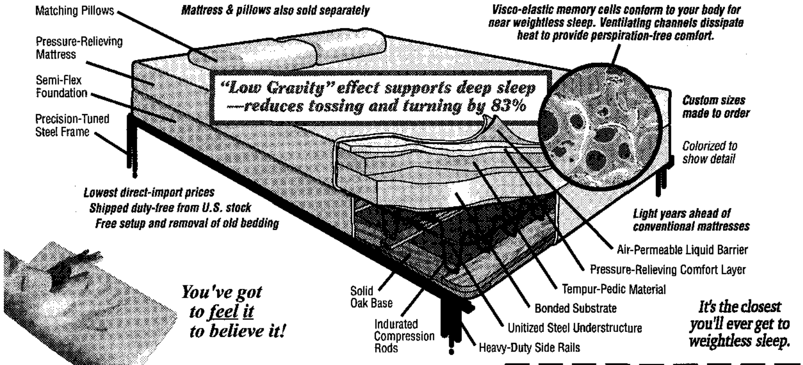
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PARIS JOURNAL

DOUBTING VINCENT

The forgery claim against van Gogh's "Sunflowers" hits a false note.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

WHEN word got around, last week, that van Gogh's "Sunflowers"—the one that Christie's sold to a Japanese insurance company back in 1987 for around forty million dollars, then the record for a picture put up at auction—might not actually be a picture of sunflowers by van Gogh, it sent shock waves right through the Paris art world, or as much of it as was left in town. (Almost everyone had fled to Provence—in this, as in so much else, following in Vincent's footsteps.) In New York and London, where people continue working in the heat, the news made people sweat some more.

The claim is one of a series of new claims about fake van Goghs that seemed to grow this week like weeds, or sunflowers. The knock on the "Sunflowers" was put forward by a French van Gogh amateur named Benoît Landais, and came soon after the revelation that Holland's own Jan Hulsker, who is always described as "the doyen of van Gogh studies," thinks that as many as forty-five pictures currently accepted as autographs ought to be rated "fishy" or "extremely fishy." Meanwhile, a German and a Swiss scholar have their sights trained on twenty-one others.

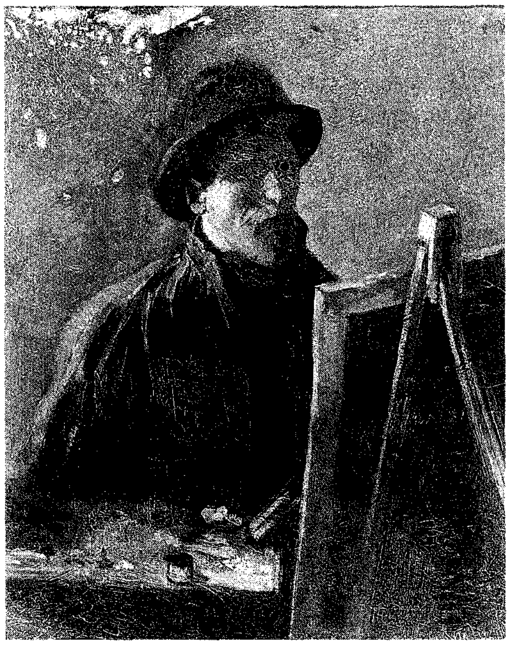
These things come and go—a tide of doubt washed over Rembrandt not long ago, of course, and has now receded—but the doubts over the "Sunflowers" seemed to give a lot of people special pleasure, perhaps because once again three favorite villains were taking it on the chin: art-world experts, the eighties, and Japanese billionaires. (Has any cultural stereotype ever changed so quickly, or been so instantly forgotten, as that of the Japanese business class? Scarcely seven years ago, Japanese businessmen were the irresistible force, what Sax Rohmer used to call the Yellow Peril Incarnate, Walkmans in their ears and irredentism in their hearts. Now they are the yokels who came to town—several towns—only to get taken, again and again and again, all that *keiretsu* cool no match in the end for the guys in the Armani suits at Columbia or, it now seems, even for the stolid guys in the Savile Row kit at Christie's.)

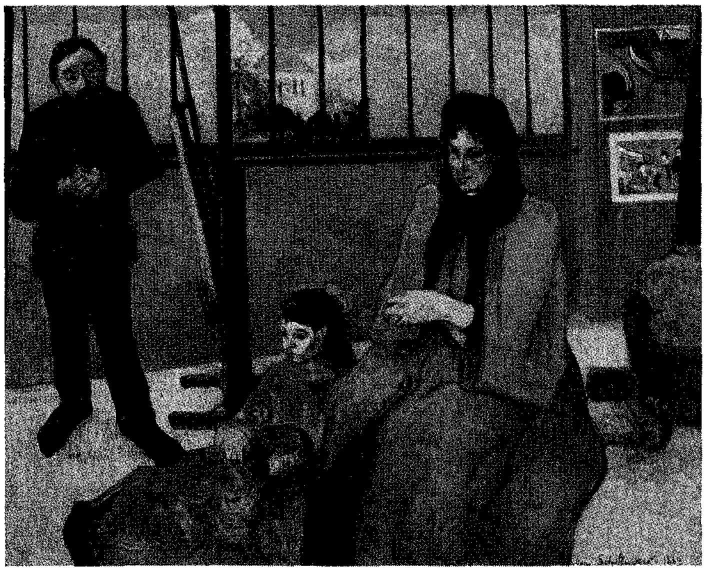
In part, the argument against the authenticity of "Sunflowers," like the one against a lot of the other suspect van Goghs, depends on the absence of a neat paper trail of possession from Vincent's hand forward. Mostly, though, the argument depends on high-handed, note-the-weak-contours-on-the-vase-at-left bits of old-fashioned connoisseurship. Tone is everything here, and tends to override memory, and even common sense. The right kind of plonking language is a lot more useful than hard technical argument. The word "sentimental," for instance, used the right way, can work on other connoisseurs like a stun gun. The German and Swiss scholars have announced that the self-portrait in The Hague is a fake because it is "too smooth" and "too sentimental." (And if you don't agree aren't you probably a little smooth and sentimental yourself?) In the case of the "Sunflowers," Landais's argument is beefed up by a lot of detail. Note the way the line describing the edge of the vase goes too high, he says, intersecting one of the flowers above. (Yeah, but wasn't that always a sign of Vincent's freedom from constraint?) Note the illogical "appendix" of the flower high on the right. (But who said that Vincent's flowers, or his mind, or his art, were logical?) In any case, the argument from insufficient virtuosity is weirdly employed in this context, since it was the essence of Vincent's genius to see that the thing done "badly" might be better than the thing done well. To impose old-fashioned academic standards on his drawing seems to miss the point. The best van Gogh might be the one in which the drawing was crudest, the forms least realized, etc. That difficulty explains why he died all alone, without selling more than one or two of his two thousand-odd works.

WHAT makes the "Sunflowers" case significant for our time is that it involves complicated meta-levels of authorship. As in Frederic Tuten's brilliant recent novel, "Van Gogh's Bad Café," where the artist is imported into the present, van Gogh emerges as an unlikely postmodern hero. In Arles in late 1888 and early 1889, van Gogh painted a picture of fourteen sunflowers and, soon afterward, the Sherrie Levine in him shining forth, painted a near-exact replica of it. The first "Sunflowers" is generally thought to be in London, at the National Gallery, and the first copy in Amsterdam, at the Van Gogh Museum (though there are plenty of people who think that the sequence may be the other way around). The third "Sunflowers" would obviously be a variant of the two others. The question, then, is not whether the Christie's-to-Japan "Sunflowers" is the original but whether it's the "authentic" copy, or a copy of the authentic copy, or, instead, a "copy" of the authentic copy made by someone other than Vincent who had seen the original and, knowing that it had been copied once, decided to copy it again, in the hope of having his original taken for the copy.

So far, the story sounds ideally postmodern: it goes in ironic circles, the word authentic hops in and out of quotation marks, and everything sells for big money. But then the story takes a curious turn away from the meta-ironic and toward the comfortingly post-ironic, the realm where appropriation reëmerges as sincerity: the favorite candidate for "faking" the "Sunflowers," if faked it is, is one of the most ardent early van Gogh lovers, the French painter Claude-Émile Schuffenecker, who now jumps out of history to have his little day.

Schuffenecker is an interesting character. He lived into the nineteen-thirties but was active mostly around the turn of the century, and for a while was pretty well known in art circles. (He's still well enough known in France to have had a retrospective at a provincial museum last year.) He tried out, sincerely and ineptly, most of the avant-garde styles of his day, and at one time or another saw salvation for his art in the Rosicrucians, the Neo-Synthesists, and the French Socialist leader Jean Jaurès. Oddly, he had very good taste: he was among the first people in France to collect Gauguin and Cézanne. Gauguin actually painted him and his family, in a good picture now at the Musée d'Orsay. Schuffenecker is a small unhappy man, wringing his hands as he stands by his easel and looks at his overdressed wife and children. How can I paint *them*, he seems to be saying, a man overwhelmed by his subject, with the sad eyebrows and long beard of an insecure French comedian.





An X-ray of van Gogh's "Self-Portrait with Dark Felt Hat at the Easel"; and Gauguin's picture of Schuffenecker at his easel.

VAN GOGH MUSEUM, SYGMA; MUSÉE D'ORSAY, GIRAUDON, SUPERSTOCK

If Schuffenecker wasn't the very first collector to buy van Gogh, he was close: in November, 1890, four months after Vincent's death, he already had one "Self-Portrait," the Met's "L'Arlésienne," and a version of the "Sunflowers." At one time, he was thought to have sixty van Goghs in his possession. If the "Sunflowers" is a fake or a forgery—or, more precisely, a simulated copy—it would almost certainly have to be by Schuffenecker, since it can be reliably traced back to his holdings. And now that Landais has published his doubts various folks have emerged to say that Schuffenecker, who was always known as Good Father Schuff, was actually just the kind of guy to pull a stunt like that, questions having been raised all along about his "contributions" to other people's pictures, including others of Vincent's. (This adds still one more fashionable villain to the story: the lovable "papa" who turns out to be molesting the pictures.)

But owning sixty van Goghs in 1900 was not exactly like owning sixty van Goghs in 1997, or even like owning one Keith Haring in 1987. It was a passionate investment, rooted in Schuffenecker's own failure as a painter, and in his desire to identify with an artist whose genius, at that point, he was almost alone in recognizing. To have added a sixty-first picture to the total cannot possibly be parsed as an act of cupidity; it had to be a labor of love. If the "Sunflowers" is not an authentic van Gogh, it must be a perfectly sincere Schuffenecker.

A FISHY smell sooner or later seeps in everywhere. Every time somebody doubts a van Gogh, somebody else starts doubting the doubter. The Paris daily *Libération*, for instance, reminded its readers last Thursday that Landais not only was without academic credentials but was also once the leading defender of a series of van Gogh drawings which everybody now rejects. Suddenly, Landais himself looks a bit infirm around the contours.

The whole dispute points to a useful moral about art forgery. The sniffy, high-brow, O.K. thing to say now about Old Master authenticity dustups is that the question of "authorship" is a nineteenth-century Romantic anachronism, falsely imposed on painters like Rembrandt and Rubens and Titian, who all worked with broad circles of collaborators. But if we are to include all those assistants and apprentices in our definition of an Old Master's "hand" perhaps we have to include in our definition of the "hand" of a modern master his broad circle of devotees, and even his posthumous devotees—all his Schuffeneckers. It is, after all, in the nature of modern art to create obsessive devotees. Sometimes the artist can become his own Schuffenecker, like Marcel Duchamp, who, after he had stopped doing original work, kept on producing replicas of what he had once done. If in Rembrandt's case we are now supposed to nudge open the charmed circle of individual genius to include a Bol or a Fabritius, assistants working close at hand, what's wrong with nudging open the charmed circle of a van Gogh to include a Schuffenecker or two, admirers waiting in the wings?

A great artist is not, as a lot of people seem to think, a kind of burglar, who leaves his fingerprints on luxury goods, but a poet, who creates a style so distinctive that poems in the style are his even when they're not. "The Polish Rider" is obviously a Rembrandt, no matter what apprentice touched it, in the same way that, say, the Washington Square Arch is by Stanford White, no matter who put the trowel to the cement. Even if the van Gogh "Sunflowers" turns out to be a Schuffenecker "Sunflowers," the Japanese were still getting value for their money. What they were buying was a little piece of the van Gogh romance, the van Gogh mystique, and what they got, if it isn't van Gogh, is a much purer expression of their own van Goghism than an honest-to-God van Gogh might be. *"Schuffenecker,"* the Japanese insurance men can say ruefully, as they admire their picture today, *"c'est nous!"* But they will probably still be sore about the money. ◆

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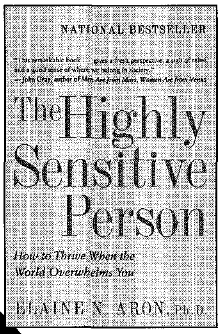
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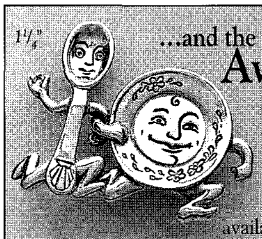

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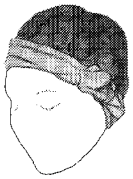

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DEPT. OF DISPUTATION

BEAR HEADED

Why the author can't bring himself to join the stampede of Wall Street optimists.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

IN the summer of 1929, the legend goes, Joseph P. Kennedy overheard some shoeshine boys exchanging stock tips, and began liquidating his portfolio. If the mania for stocks had reached that level, he reasoned, it was time to get out. When Black Thursday arrived, on October 24th, the sometime bootlegger, far from being wiped out, actually made money by selling stocks short as prices plummeted.

In the last few years, I have been spying phantom shoeshine boys everywhere. One was a photographer I met at a party who told me that he had just made ten thousand dollars trading high-technology stocks. Another was a fashion designer whose company was making a stock offering and who reportedly insisted that the bankers pricing the issue consult with a numerologist. A third was my wife, whose disdain for Wall Street is exceeded only by my grim fascination with it. One day, she came home and asked how much we had invested in the stock market. Nothing, I replied. She looked aghast. Didn't I know, she demanded, that stocks consistently produce the highest return of any investment over the long term?

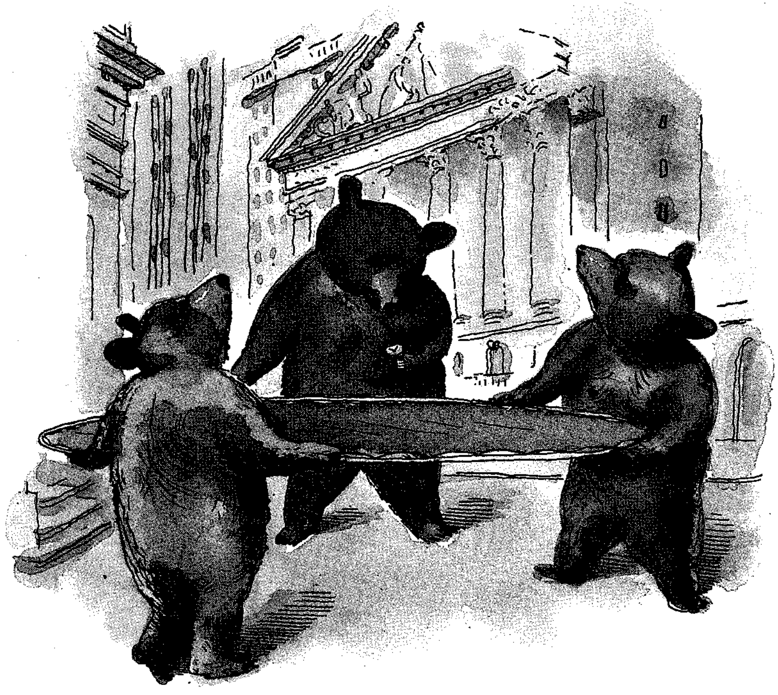
Actually, I knew it all too well. As a financial columnist, I was one of the dour prognosticators who had repeatedly predicted that the great bull market was heading for a crash—or, at least, a correction. My first such warning appeared in February, 1994, when the Dow Jones Industrials Average had just passed 4,000; last week, the Dow passed 8,000, before slipping back to just under 7,900 on Friday. Anybody who sold stock on my advice has missed out on a capital gain of roughly a hundred per cent. It is true that such a person (if he exists) has probably slept more soundly for the last three and a half years, but lately, I imagine, he has been having bad dreams about the new Lexus in his neighbor's driveway, the product of its owner's decision to listen to that nice young man from Merrill Lynch instead of that idiotic columnist.

Of course, I am not alone in having been made to look foolish. A list of the revered Wall Street figures who have suggested at some point during the past few years that the stock market is overvalued includes Barton Biggs, Leon Black, Warren Buffett, Alan Greenspan, Carl Icahn, Henry Kaufman, John Neff, George Soros, Sir John Templeton, Larry Tisch, and Jeff Vinik.

Biggs, the chairman of Morgan Stanley Asset Management, is a sixty-four-year-old former Marine Corps officer whose enthusiasms include mountain climbing and salty language. When I visited him last year in his corner office, high above Sixth Avenue, he made his views plain. The only question, he said, was whether we were facing a "cyclical bear market" or "one of the ball-busters that turn brokers into high-school teachers and traders into taxi-drivers." In the twelve months following our conversation, the Dow rose by twenty-five hundred points. Last fall, Biggs changed his mind and advised his clients to start buying stocks again. (With the buying frenzy all around him, he couldn't afford not to.) But lately he has reverted to apocalyptic gloom. "I have the feeling we are setting up for something out of the blue soon," he wrote in a recent newsletter. "Something with the stunning violence of a punch in the mouth when you aren't expecting it."

When I caught up with Biggs again a couple of weeks ago, he was puttering around his Connecticut garden. "Everyone is tired of talking bearish and being wrong," he said, sounding philosophical. The market dip in April, when the Dow fell by almost ten per cent but then came back strong, was "the last nail in the bears' coffin." He went on, "But there are still a lot of people who are bearish. It's a question of whether those who are bearish, most of whom are over fifty, are still running money. The guys who have the cash flow are those who are running the mutual funds, and those guys are anywhere from twenty-eight to thirty-eight years old. Their job is to compete against the index, and cash doesn’t help them do that.”

Most of the bears remember 1973-1974, the last time the market took a sustained dive (the 1987 crash was only a blip by comparison), and they refuse to believe that the financial law of gravity has been permanently repealed. One of the doubters is Warren Buffett, who is probably the most successful stock-market investor of the century. A hundred dollars invested in his holding company, Berkshire Hathaway, when he took it over, in 1965, would now be worth more than a quarter of a million dollars. Early last year, with the price of a single Berkshire share approaching thirty-four thousand dollars, the company said, in an S.E.C. filing, “Neither Mr. Buffett nor [his vice-chairman] Mr. Munger would currently buy Berkshire shares at that price, nor would they recommend that their families or friends do so.” This was an unprecedented announcement. Buffet is known for always telling shareholders what he thinks, but nobody could remember the last time a company chairman had publicly advised investors not to buy his stock. Now that Buffett sounded bearish, surely the market would stall. Not quite. In the sixteen months since that warning, the price of Berkshire shares has shot up by fourteen thousand dollars more. (Last week, they were changing hands at forty-eight thousand dollars.)



Most bears remember 1973-74, the last time the market took a sustained dive, and they refuse to believe that the financial law of gravity has been repealed.

BARRY BLITT

Alan Greenspan’s warning came eight months ago, when the normally reticent Federal Reserve chairman surprised the financial markets by asking whether “irrational exuberance” had taken over on Wall Street. This was only the third time in seventy years that a Fed chairman had suggested that stock prices might be inflated. Although Greenspan subsequently modified his views—telling Congress that the prices could be justified if company earnings kept on growing rapidly—he was only saying publicly what many senior Fed officials had been saying privately for a long time. Early last year, I was interviewing one of them when he glanced at a chart on his computer screen and said slowly, “Stock prices just don’t keep going up like this.”

Even George Soros, the renowned speculator, seems powerless before the great bull run. A couple of weeks ago, he gave an interview to the German news magazine *Focus* in which he appeared to raise the spectre of a global financial crisis. He told the interviewer, “All sorts of new investors are popping up, who have very little experience with the market. If this trend suddenly comes to a halt and the investors start to panic and decide to leave the market en masse, then we’ll have a stock-market crash. Besides that, the portfolios of the largest investors are increasingly international. If one of the large markets crashed, it would set off a domino effect. It would bring about an international stock-market crash.” Soros stressed that his observations were “theoretical,” and said, “The present situation can continue indefinitely, until it reaches the point at which financial markets have distanced themselves too far from reality.” He added that he didn’t think his words “could provoke a stock-market crash,” and in that, at least, he was proved correct. The day his interview was reported in the New York press, the Dow rose by a hundred and three points.

HOW have so many smart business minds been getting it so wrong? To understand that, we need to address the vexing question of what a common stock is worth. This problem has preoccupied many great thinkers, but so far none have provided a wholly convincing answer. There are, however, three practical ways to figure out whether a share of stock is cheap or expensive: look at how much cash it yields each year and compare this to its price (this is called the “dividend yield”); calculate the firm’s profits per share and compare this number to the share price (the “price-earnings ratio”); and tally up how much the company paid for its assets and compare this to its market value (the “price-to-book ratio”). Judged by any of these methods, current share prices are high. Since 1926, the dividend yield on the Standard & Poor’s 500 index has averaged 4.38 per cent, but last week it was 1.65 per cent, the lowest level ever. Since 1928, companies on the index have traded at an average of fourteen times earnings, but last week they were selling at twenty-three times earnings. Between 1977 and 1996, the average price-to-book ratio of S. & P. 500 stocks was less than two, but now the ratio is close to five.

To many Wall Street veterans, the message from these numbers couldn’t be clearer. “Obviously, the market is kind of asking for it,” John Neff, who managed the Windsor Fund for thirty-one years, told me. “You’ve got Gillette and Coca-Cola selling at fifty-nine and forty-six times earnings. It’s almost mindless buying.” Neff went on to say that the current period reminded him of 1973-74, when stocks rose sharply, then tumbled by a third. This time around, he thought, the market could fall by twenty-five per cent, which would be equivalent to two thousand Dow points. "The academicians say we have an efficient market. Hell, it's even less efficient than when I started," he said.

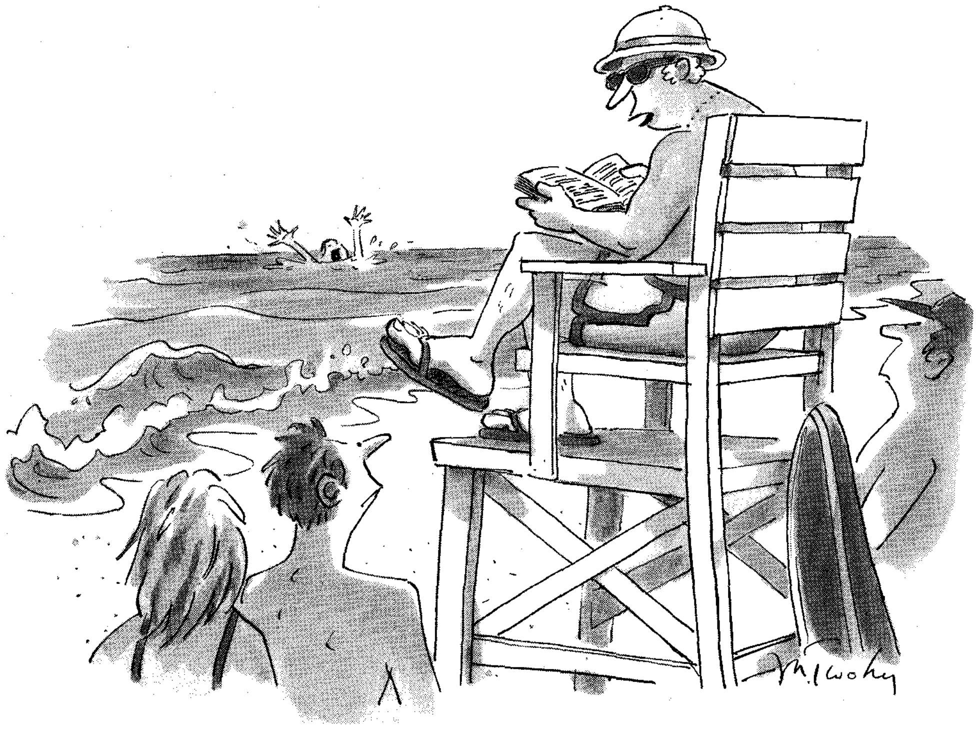
That's the old-fashioned view, favored mainly by investors who take their *Wall Street Journal* with Metamucil. To get a more contemporary take on the market, I went to see Abby Joseph Cohen, the forty-five-year-old chief U.S. investment strategist at Goldman Sachs, who is one of the few prominent female figures on Wall Street. For the past six years, Cohen's investment team has been ranked No. 1 in a survey of fourteen major brokerage houses, and this performance has turned her into a big attraction at investment seminars and on television shows like "Wall Street Week." "We've been consistently bullish since 1991," Cohen told me. "We have been taking this long-term view which basically says that there are some wonderful things going on in the U.S. economy"—the wonderful things being very low inflation, corporate restructuring, declining budget deficits, and soaring profits. "The people who say the market is up *x* per cent and therefore is overpriced are not looking at the right thing," she continued. "Stock prices should reflect growth of earnings or some other fundamental standpoint. Our conclusion is that the market is reasonably priced."

Cohen doesn't disagree that prices are high in comparison with traditional valuation standards, but she believes that those standards are out of date. Dividend yields don't mean much these days, she says, because companies tend to distribute cash to shareholders in the form of share buybacks. Price-earnings ratios look lofty when they are compared to historic averages but not quite so high when they are compared to periods when inflation was as low as it is today. Price-to-book ratios are meaningless, because the denominator in the ratio includes only firms' tangible assets, such as buildings and machinery, while excluding their intangible assets, such as management ability, franchise value, and computer-software investment. "Is there something peculiar about the ratio people are willing to pay? I would say no, because the returns are there," she said. "You are getting extraordinary returns on the tangible assets, because it is more than the tangible assets that give you the earnings."

The trends that Cohen highlights are real, but most of them are not new. If markets are rational and forward-looking, I asked, why weren't these trends reflected in share prices years ago? "Some of these changes are so dramatic that one cannot expect them to be incorporated quickly by investors," she replied. "The markets are pretty efficient at recognizing changes from quarter to quarter, but these are broad changes that really are decade-long developments."

On one important point, Cohen and the other optimists are undoubtedly right. Skeptics like me seriously underestimated the ability of American firms to sharply boost their profits, year after year. Since 1991, profits of S. & P. 500 companies have risen at an annual rate of close to twenty per cent, and some companies have raised their earnings by astronomical amounts. Intel, for example, made post-tax profits of more than five billion dollars last year—a rise of five hundred per cent on its 1992 results. Earnings expansion of this kind allows a firm's share price to jump dramatically without raising its price-earnings ratio too much. Intel has risen from six and a half dollars at the start of 1992 to eighty-nine dollars last week, but it is still trading at "only" twenty-three times earnings, a multiple that is considered to be fairly modest these days, especially in high-technology stocks.

The optimists are also right when they say that the dangers of inflation in the economy have been overstated. Rising inflation is bad news for the stock market because it invariably prompts the Fed to raise interest rates, and that rise, in turn, hits corporate profits and raises the yield on investment alternatives to stocks, such as bonds and bank deposits. For thirty years, it has been a given among economists that inflation eventually rises as economic upswings proceed. A couple of weeks ago, though, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that after six years of economic expansion wholesale prices fell slightly in June. This was their sixth consecutive monthly fall, something that hadn't happened since the government started keeping these statistics, in 1947. "I say that the great bull market is solidly based on rational exuberance about profits and near-zero inflation," Edward Yardeni, the chief economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said recently.

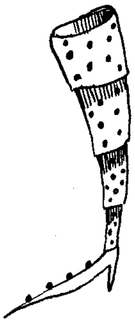


"We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue."

"The Dow can go to ten thousand by the year 2000. Then fifteen thousand by the year 2005 is likely."

In a recent broadcast of "Wall Street Week," Louis Rukeyser saluted investors who have "the faith." The comparison between investing and religion is apt: both involve forgoing current pleasures for future gain, and both occasionally inspire Jimmy Swaggart-style displays of contrition. As the market has continued its rise, many Wall Street bears have publicly recanted their views. Perhaps the most prominent was David Shulman, who works at Salomon Brothers. During 1994 and 1995, Shulman was one of the most cautious voices on Wall Street. Then, in December, 1995, he wrote a brochure for clients, called "1996: Stock Market Bubble or Paradigm Shift?," in which he admitted that he had been wrong about the market, and argued that the declining fear of inflation had caused "the third fundamental shift in stock market valuation in forty years." When I asked Shulman about this reversal, he replied, "I wish I had come up with it sooner. It was something I was thinking about all along, but you've got to be very careful, because it's only happened twice before in forty years—1958 on the upside and 1974 on the downside." Shulman now thinks the Dow could hit 8,500 before falling back.

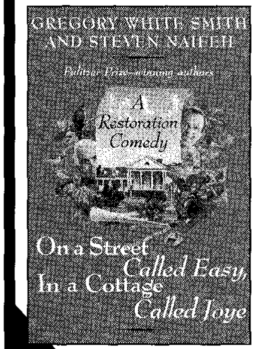
Having been wrong for so long, I am tempted to join the converts, but can't quite bring myself to do it. For one thing, the point of maximum optimism in any speculative boom is often the most dangerous. And, having been trained as a historian, I can't let go of the idea that the past holds lessons for the future. Early in 1989, I went to Tokyo. For two weeks, I talked to bankers and stockbrokers, and they all told me that the Nikkei index, then hovering around thirty-one thousand, was not nearly as overvalued as it appeared from afar. Japan was a zero-inflation economy, and its superefficient companies were the envy of the world, they said. Moreover, orthodox valuation measures didn't apply to Tokyo. I dutifully noted all this down and, after returning to New York, wrote an article about it. The Nikkei continued its climb past thirty-five thousand and seemed headed for forty thousand. (Some analysts suggested that fifty thousand was a reasonable target.) Then, one day late in 1989, the Bank of Japan raised interest rates. The Nikkei started falling, and it didn't stop until mid-1992, by which time it had dropped to below fifteen thousand. Five years later, it is still hovering around twenty thousand—some forty-seven per cent below its 1989 peak.



The other obstacle to my personal redemption is a little book by John Kenneth Galbraith entitled "The Great Crash 1929." Galbraith is unfashionable these days, and I have been meaning to throw that book out for years. One reason I haven't done so is Galbraith's description of Roger Babson, a mercurial columnist whose bearish comments were a regular, and much derided, feature of American life in the late twenties. "As an educator, philosopher, theologian, statistician, forecaster, economist, and friend of the law of gravity, he had sometimes been thought to spread himself too thin," Galbraith wrote of Babson. "The methods by which he reached his conclusions were a problem. They involved a hocus-pocus of lines and areas on a chart. Intuition, and possibly even mysticism, played a part."

On September 5, 1929, Babson gave a speech to a group of businessmen in which he said, "Sooner or later a crash is coming, and it may be terrific." The Dow could drop by between sixty and eighty per cent, he continued, and "factories will be shut down. . . . Men will be thrown out of work. . . . The vicious circle will get in full swing and the result will be a serious business depression." Not surprisingly, this outburst was not well received on Wall Street. One brokerage house said that it wouldn't be "stampeded into selling stocks because of a gratuitous forecast of a bad break in the market." An editorial in *Barron's* mocked Babson and declared that anyone familiar with the "notorious inaccuracy" of his past statements wouldn't take him seriously. Irving Fisher, the most eminent economist in the country, echoed these views and added that the new and highly popular investment trusts (the twenties equivalent of mutual funds) offered investors "wide and well-managed diversification."

Six weeks later, the crash began. ♦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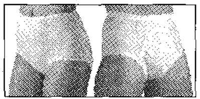

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POSTSCRIPT

THE EMPEROR OF DREAMS

How the designer who bridged the gap between high fashion and rock and roll became the Medici of the nineties.

BY ANDREA LEE

When the news of Gianni Versace's murder in front of his Miami Beach house broke in his own country last week, the Italian press expressed a national shock and grief in floods of language worthy of a dozen opera librettos. "He was killed," one journalist wrote, in *La Repubblica*, "like a prince laid low in his own blood, with one hand outstretched toward his oil paintings, his tapestries, his gold." For Italians, and for much of the rest of the world, Versace, by the end of his life, had become not merely a fashion designer but a kind of fantasy hero, one who satisfied a universal craving for flamboyant effect. Like Coco Chanel, he had convinced the public that his life was as exciting as his designs. In the course of his twenty-year career, he caused himself to be more closely identified with the busy material world—with the hypercivilized complexities of money and celebrity—than any other designer who has ever lived. By the time of his death, at the age of fifty, he had built up an eight-hundred-million-dollar worldwide empire that produced everything from haute couture and teacups to diamond rings and perfume for babies and, perhaps most significant, that intangible but powerful thing called an image. Anyone who has leafed through a fashion magazine knows what it is: money, sex, and fame, all enhanced by a halo of international glamour that shines like the golden snakes of his company's Medusa logo.

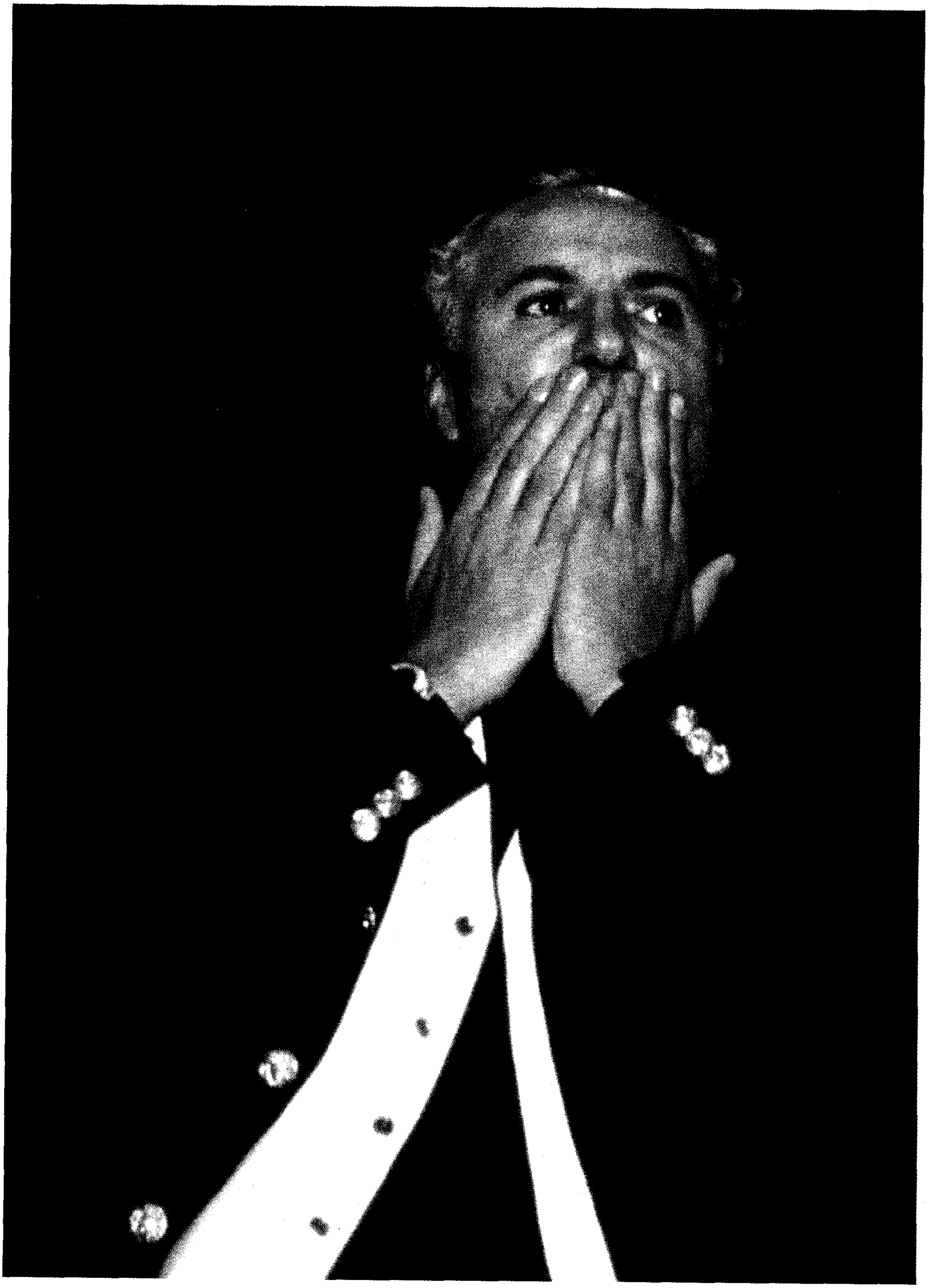
In a sense, Versace's image was a kaleidoscope of smaller images—a legion of celebrated or notorious faces that appeared in gossip magazines, in the fashion press, and in the lush advertising spreads created in the designer's long collaboration with photographers like Richard Avedon, Bruce Weber, and Helmut Newton. It is summed up in the shot of Madonna in a Versace bathing suit, painting the nails of a poodle. Or of Liam Gallagher boogying down the Versace catwalk to Tupac Shakur's "California Love." It's Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington strolling along the runway in baby-doll Versace dresses, lip-synching to George Michael, like an all-goddess rock group. It's Elizabeth Hurley's opulent curves gleaming through Versace gold safety pins in a dress that almost isn't there. It's Trudie Styler in a Versace wedding dress, riding a horse led by Sting. It's an all but naked Claudia Schiffer, holding a single Versace plate over her crotch. And, especially, it's Donatella Versace, the sister and alter ego of the designer, staring out of the darkness of a Tribeca party, her hair the platinum blond of Andy Warhol's wig, her face dazzlingly blank.

The seductiveness of such visions was intensified by our knowing, as the publicists always let us know, that the superstars featured didn't just wear Versace's spectacular clothes; they were also great friends of his. It was Versace who finally and definitively bridged the gap between fashion and celebrity—he was the only one among the contemporary titans of Paris and Milan who became not only a star designer but a star. Similarly, his work bridged the gap between the raw energy of street culture and the sumptuous tradition of high fashion. As Richard Martin, the curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, puts it, "When he made a dress out of plastic, it looked like bluejeans, and yet it was an incredible evening gown that would be worthy of a place at the Court of Empress Eugénie. The street was in a sense plundered by fashion in the second half of the twentieth century, but there is one isolated figure standing on the street corner, and that, of course, is the prostitute. That's the person Versace made fashion. He looked at prostitute style and made it high style in the eighties. I think of him as the great post-Freudian designer—one who had no guilt whatsoever. He created things about sensuality and sexuality. It was all unabashed." Versace was alert to the excitement of pop culture—he absorbed it like a sponge and then contributed to it himself. The music world, especially, was a source of fascination to him, and he was perhaps the first designer to use rock stars as models, icons, and inspiration in his work. Somewhere between the crude brilliance of the younger designers and the static grandeur of the old men, Versace was unique for his ongoing ability to be at the same time unequivocally wild and unassailably elegant—that rare combination which in fashion is a form of true luxury. He never denied his outrageous imagination, and yet he never disdained the humbler mysteries of cut and drape. In the careful calibration of his fantasy, he never made a vulgar dress—though he enjoyed walking on the edge of vulgarity—and never, certainly, a boring one.

Over the last half year, I spent some time in conversation with Versace, at one or another of his lavish residences; he had four altogether, two in Italy and two in America, and each was a spirited variation on the theme of excess. The Miami vacation house where he was shot, Casa Casuarina, was built in 1930 and was transformed by the designer into a high-camp tropical fever dream, where stained glass mingles with neo-Roman pebble mosaics; it was, while he lived, the epicenter of Miami's South Beach.

"The thing that made my life special

KEITH BUTLER/REX USA



"I'd like to live forever," Versace told the author recently. "If there's anything I'm afraid of, it's missing what will happen tomorrow."

was growing up in the South of Italy, living near the sea, living with a mother who was such a character, a father who was such a poet," Versace told me as we sat in his recently acquired town house on East Sixty-fourth Street, which, to the bemusement of neighbors like Edgar Bronfman and Ivana Trump, was remade by Versace's army of decorators and artisans into an Aladdin's cave of marble and ormolu. It sheltered an art collection featuring major works by Schnabel, Lichtenstein, Warhol, and Basquiat, and also some of the designer's eighteen Picassos; and, like all his residences except for his Milan apartment, it included living quarters for Donatella Versace and her family and for Gianni's older brother, Santo, who handles the finances of the empire. "Growing up with people who leave you free—that was the best sensation I had when I was a child," Versace went on. "They never said to me, 'Don't do this or that.' They explained to me that if you do this you get that result. They never tried to force me to do things. All my friends had direction from their parents and couldn't decide anything. I decided my life. That was the best part."

As we talked about the Southern Italian city of Reggio Calabria, where Versace grew up, both of us were in a state of pleasant torpor; we'd just eaten a big lunch with Versace's companion of eleven years, Antonio D'Amico, and the gallery owner Larry Gagosian. It was a casual meal, Versace style. We ate with gold cutlery from Sèvres plates, afloat in a stream of chatter about Kate Moss's thighs, vacations in St. Barts, and Gianni Agnelli's penchant for driving too fast. The menu was suitable for Sunday at Grandmother's house, if Grandmother was a Calabrian baroness: there was a monumental pasta torte, a stuffed roast with vegetables, an orange custard with raspberry glaze, and coffee served in priceless Capodimonte cups painted with portraits of the Bonaparte family.

The ornate traditional food was an apt prelude to Versace's childhood reminiscences, an idyll that, as told by the designer, had the baroque flavor of an Italian film somewhere between "Amarcord" and "The Leopard." It featured young Gianni growing up with Santo and Donatella in the romantic atmosphere of a rich bourgeois family: Father was a businessman who loved opera and literature; Mother was the glamorous, free-spirited proprietress of an important dressmaking atelier. The port city around them was filled with grand architectural relics of the ancient colonies of Magna Graecia, and in a fountain near the family house was a Roman mosaic of Medusa which would one day inspire the company logo. "*Ho sempre sognato e saputo quello che sarei diventato*," he told me: "I have always dreamed and known what I was going to become."

Most of the innumerable portraits of Versace—he was depicted by Schnabel, Warhol, Avedon, Weber, and even Karl Lagerfeld—emphasize a classical quality in his face, which, like the faces of so many Southern Italians, recalls the ancestral Greek colonists. But, with the common failing of portraitists dealing with powerful men, they have all tended to render him as a hero or an emperor. (In Schnabel's broken-crockery painting, which hung downstairs in the New York house, he sports an imperial Byzantine scowl.) What the artists missed was something restless and playful in Versace. If he came from classical antiquity, he resembled nothing so much as a faun. Small and compact, with clear, tanned skin and graying hair and beard, he exuded a lively magnetism—the vitality of some Mediterranean men and women who seem to carry a private store of sunlight inside them.

We talked about his apprenticeship in his mother's atelier, where from the time he could walk he absorbed the craft of cutting and detailing from the redoubtable Signora Franca and her flock of seamstresses. "I lived in an atmosphere of only women," he said. "I was spoiled by women—I had twenty friends, twenty mamas. When I came home from school, all the women fussed over me—Giannino, they called me. 'Come with me, Giannino!' "

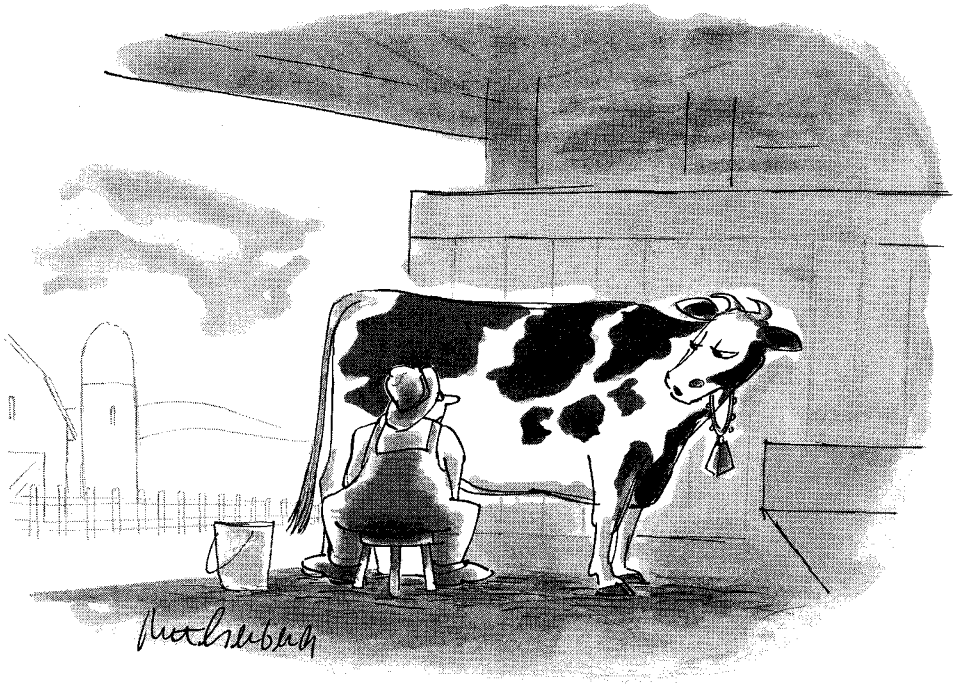
He had little to say about his father, Antonio Versace. "A strange man, really, with a very private inner life. The most important relationship was with my mother, who was a strong woman—ahead of her time, since Calabria was a bit backward in mentality. My mother was a woman who travelled, who went to London and Paris, who bought Dior and Chanel." I recalled a nineteen-forties photograph I had seen of Franca Versace: a woman with a vivid, round face, who was wearing a belted dress, exquisitely cut and embroidered. "Because of her, I always lived in an atmosphere where one breathed international air—it wasn't petty, *capisci*. My mother was a fascinating woman, very beautiful. When she dressed a wedding party, people didn't go to see the bride, they went to see Signora Franca. She wore amazing hats—she was very much a personality. In everyday life, she was too busy to care what she put on, but when she went out, she had a"—here he broke laughingly into English—" 'star system'!"

By the early seventies, Signora Franca's second son, who had already been designing dresses as a teen-ager, was invited to the northern fashion centers of Florence and Milan, and was promoted as a rising young talent. Versace tended to be vague in discussing the relationships—whether friendly, businesslike, or amorous—connected with the beginning of his career. People in the fashion world say he was helped most at the start by attracting the attention of important *rappresentanti*—the travelling representatives of the major Italian clothing manufacturers during the period. His mentor, they say, was Gigi Monti, the founder of Basile, who then designed for Missoni and Krizia, and sold to Franca Versace's shop. Through Monti and other contacts, Versace found work designing with manufacturers in Tuscany and Santa Margherita, and then in Milan, with Callaghan and Genny. "He had success from the beginning," a Milanese knitwear designer told me acidly, "since it was the seventies, the beginning of *la moda italiana*, and anything one did had success. Besides, the success of a designer is entirely up to his *rappresentanti*, and from the start Versace was backed by some of the biggest names in the business."

Joan Juliet Buck, who was the Italian correspondent for *Women's Wear Daily* in the seventies and is now the editor of French *Vogue*, remembers the young Versace as "very sweet, very enthusiastic and excited about life." His early designs, she says, "were always sort of skittish and sexy and immediately comprehensible. There was nothing intellectual about them—they were like candy." But even then Versace had the same sanguine self-confidence he radiated as a fifty-year-old power. "When they called me the first time from Tus-

BETTINA RHEIMS/SYGMA

"He looked at prostitute style and made it high style," Richard Martin says. Salt-N-Pepa and Spinderella wearing Versace.



"By the way, I'm taking off the first two weeks in August."

cany with a good contract," he told me, "I called up a designer in Milan, my friend Walter Albini, who was No. 1 at that time in Italy, and I asked him how much he got for a collection. He said he got four and a half million lire, so I asked for five. And they paid it."

Versace also captivated the press very early on, according to Patrick McCarthy, the editorial director of *Women's Wear Daily* and *W*, "because his clothes made great pictures." He added, "Even when he couldn't afford it, he was hiring the greatest models: when other people would have one or two of the so-called supermodels, he would have every single one flown in from wherever they were doing shoots, at his expense, so that he could have a runway filled with fourteen or sixteen of them. And those pictures are irresistible for a fashion magazine, or for newspapers. He was mortgaging himself for the future, which turned out to be a good investment."

Perhaps the most dramatic example of Versace's manipulation of the press was the freewheeling way he encouraged the blurring of lines between advertising and editorial as he became more and more successful. McCarthy points out that Versace "pioneered the whole 'I'll give you my ad campaign if you make it look like editorial' thing, which the American press didn't buy but the European press went crazy for. The London *Sunday Times* was running Avedon's pictures of Elton John in Versace on the cover, as editorial. The Italian press went crazy, too, so you'd see a magazine with a Versace on the cover, and Versace would have given them the picture, taken the picture, paid for the picture. They got a Mario Testino picture of Madonna, or a Steven Meisel picture, which they never could have afforded to do themselves—and they'd have a movie star they wouldn't have been given access to otherwise."

By 1982, when Versace won the prestigious Golden Eye award for his women's collection, he had entered the top rank of designers. On the subject of his peers, he said, "I've always had good relations with others in the business, like Karl [Lagerfeld]. I have friends in this business, because I'm fairly generous. I don't know what jealousy is; I don't care about it. People always put me in competition with Armani, but I couldn't care less what he does. Because, you understand, he's the opposite of me."

For years, journalists made much of the bitchery between "Fashion's King of Rock and Roll" and "the Master of Minimalism, Mr. Beige," as one newspaper dubbed Versace and Armani. ("Versace was always sort of the 'mistress' to Armani's 'wife' " is how Anna Wintour, the editor of *Vogue*, has described their differing styles.) There were the competitive shows on both continents, the parties with wall-to-wall celebrities, and the race for American acreage: Armani opened both Emporio and Giorgio Armani on Madison Avenue last fall, just after Versace opened his palatial flagship store in the Vanderbilt "marble twin," on Fifth Avenue. There was the contest for the loyalty of Eric Clapton, who, once a Versace fan, was seen hugging the Master of Minimalism after a Milan show. There was last year's brouhaha when Mr. Beige made headlines by declaring that fashion was dead, and the King of Rock and Roll retorted that Armani, no longer fashionable himself, was talking about a "personal problem."

"*Sai, un piccolo nasty c'è da tutte due le parti*—you know, there is a little bit of 'nasty' on both sides," Versace admitted to me, "because, you know, business is business. For twenty years, he's had to look at me, and I've always had to—well, there have always been the two of us in Milan. Then the others arrived, but at the end of the story it is still between him and me. Prada arrived—welcome. Gigli arrived—welcome. Gucci arrived—welcome. At least, it was that way for me. For him, it was jealousy, jealousy, jealousy. We are totally different."

I observed that it is sometimes stimulating to have a rival, and he said, "It has been the good fortune of the two of us for the last twenty years to have an opposite. I dress a woman who is more beautiful, more glamorous. I love women. He, on the other hand, has a type of woman who is always a little sombre, a little dull. They call it chic. I've never seen it as chic, but everyone has his own opinion!"

TRAVELLING between Europe and America during the months I spent getting to know Versace, I found that mentioning his name in conversation never evoked an indifferent response.

"The Versace thing is pure Porto Rotondo!" said a friend of mine in Milan, a sportswear manufacturer who had known the designer for decades. He was referring to the jet-set resort that the Aga Khan created from an empty bay in Sardinia; "Porto Rotondo" has come to mean a de-luxe fake. "There was no rich background, no grand, high-fashion atelier. They were a simple family: the father sold appliances, and the mother made dresses in her little shop. It was a *merceria-abbigliamento*"—a small clothing shop that also sells buttons and accessories—"and its name, if I recall, was Vogue. The rest is fantasy."

"Versace—*per carità!* Oh, please, no!" This was a rich housewife at a dinner party in Turin, my home city—which to some represents the apogee of Northern Italian provincial conservatism. "Those loud prints, and the gold, and all the naked men! *Ma, sono tipicamente meridionali*—they are typical Southerners."

"Versace is the king," said my husband's business partner, a Hong Kong Chinese entrepreneur, who spends his evenings in karaoke bars, and who for the last few years has been sending me Versace trinkets on every possible ceremonial occasion. "You can really *see* Versace!"

"I could try to act intellectual and say he's vulgar, but the fact is that I adore him," said the most chic woman I know, the Parisian wife of a Greek businessman. "Don't you just think he's the heart and soul of modern Italy? Extreme brashness, extreme energy, extreme elegance. I love eating from his plates."

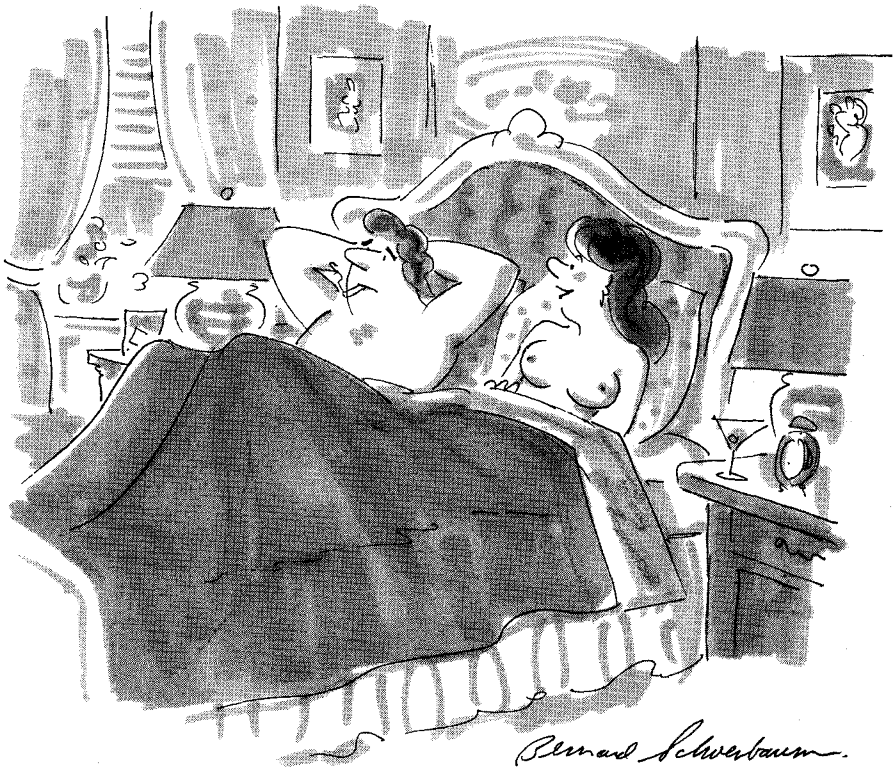
"Technically, he's ahead of any other designer, even Ferrè," said an Italian woman who manufactures a medium-priced range of women's clothes. "He cuts brilliantly. You have to be in the business to understand."

SOMETIMES Versace's flamboyant public image was at odds with what was really going on in his private life. In the winter and spring of 1996, he was afflicted by a rare cancer of the inner ear. The illness was successfully cured by chemotherapy and surgery, but not before reports had emerged in Milan, Paris, and New York that the designer was dying. There were rumors of AIDS; the most extravagant story making the rounds in Milan was that the designer, in a secluded French clinic, had secretly had his blood drained and replaced. Donatella Versace began to be scrutinized as the presumed heiress apparent, and she appeared much more frequently in the media. The announcement of Versace's recovery quelled the rumors (and, incidentally, is said to have sparked some tension between him and his sister, who had to step back into his shadow again), but Versace told me calmly that at first the prognosis had not been good. "When, after the analyses, counter-analyses, CAT scans, and so on, I realized that it was possible that at not even fifty years old I could just . . . go, I said to myself, 'Well, every day that I live from now on—it's my party.' " He went on, "I thought, *Benissimo*. If I have to die, I can thank God that I have lived forty-nine fantastic years. I don't have any regrets; I've always done what I wanted. I have a splendid family, a tranquil personal life. I adore the work I do. Besides that, I have the privilege of designing for the theatre, and I've gotten to know the greatest artists of this century. I mean everybody, from Rauschenberg to Twombly. I even met Picasso, when I was twenty-two. What more could anyone want?"

People had told me that Versace was different after his illness, and he agreed. "I've become more human. I understand more, and I'm more tolerant. I'm happy to be alive. I see more of my friends, try to be more available to the people who work with me. I've changed my relationship with the press: I give fewer interviews. In fact, this may be one of the last that I do. I see life in a different way, *capisci*. I know now that everything passes, that one day I am going to die, as everyone else dies. That every success transforms itself into something that ends. That's to say, I don't have illusions—I'm happy to live, I live intensely, and I don't have regrets."

I asked the inevitable question: Was he religious? In a flash, his thoughtful expression changed to the mischievous grin of a faun. "Yes, I believe in God, but I'm not the kind of religious person who goes to church, who believes in the fairy tale of Jesus born in the stable with the donkey. That, no—I'm not stupid. I can't believe that God, with all the power that he has, had to have himself born in a stable. *Non sarebbe stato comodo*—it wouldn't have been comfortable!"

VERSACE'S own religion, if he had one, was to all appearances a curious mixture of faith in family and faith in the fashion business. I observed this one evening in January at a dinner in Donatella Versace's suite in the Paris Ritz. It was haute-couture week, and the French fashion establishment had



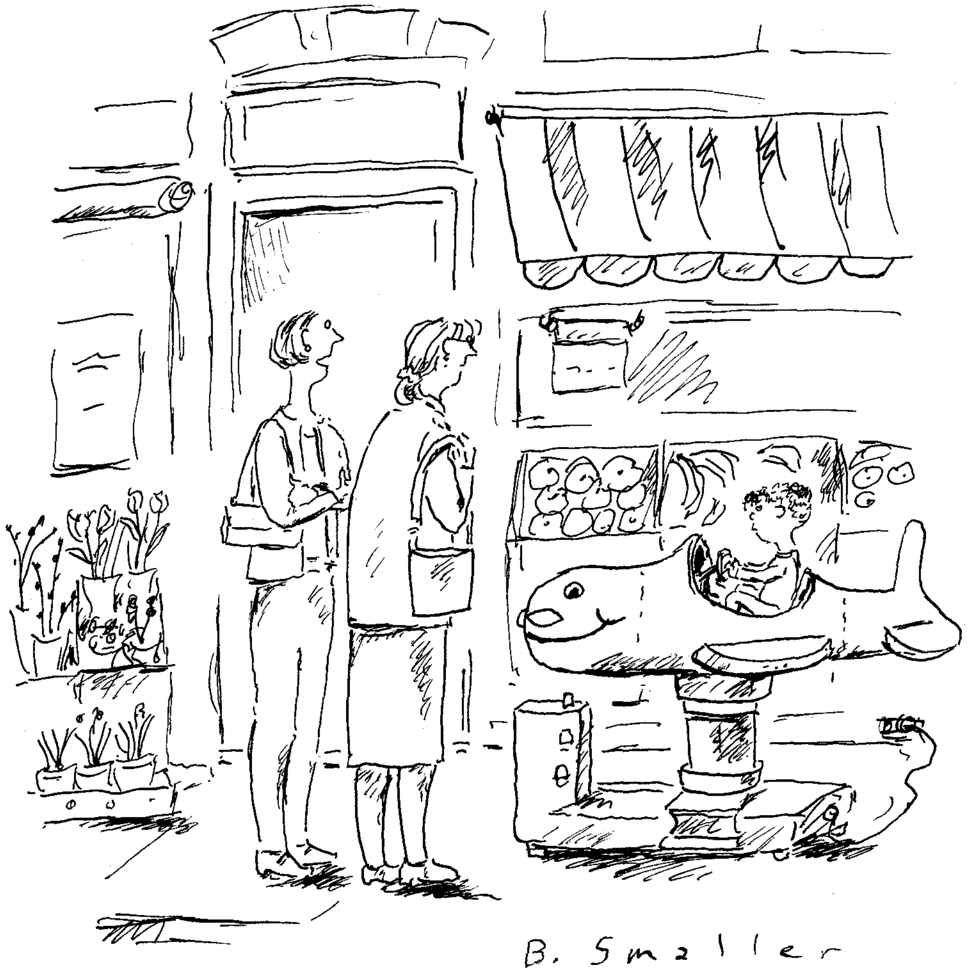
"Look at the bright side, honey. You've had great timing in the market."

its knickers in a twist over the twin débuts of two wild Englishmen—John Galliano, at Dior, and Alexander McQueen, at Givenchy. Thanks to Galliano's Masai collars and McQueen's gilded bare tits, Versace, along with the other big names, was thrown into the shade somewhat. He was canny enough not to try for a sensation; instead, he presented a high-church collection of glorious long parfait-colored evening gowns, bias-cut in overlapping transparent layers. "I've had a neoclassical period and a baroque period," he had told me earlier, in New York. "And now I'm having a so-called minimalist period—a rich minimalism, though. At first, I had to do a bit of 'scream' to have real success, but now I don't need to do those things. I don't have to *fare il giovane*—don't have to act like a kid anymore."

So, with the new kids screaming for attention, Versace had retreated into a dignified grandeur—"*ambiance très star*," French *Vogue* said of his show—and was marking the occasion not with the kind of Cecil B. De Mille bashes he was known for but with a very small, intimate evening, practically en famille. There were Naomi Campbell, Stella Tennant, and a phalanx of blond models fresh from the runway, who in Versace gowns and with neatly braided hair had the polite air of little girls allowed to stay up and dine with the grownups. There was his close friend Elton John, who the night before had been with him at the Palais de Chaillot for the première of Maurice Béjart's AIDS-inspired ballet, for which Versace did the costumes and Elton John sang. There were the beacons of the fashion press: Anna Wintour, André Leon Talley, Liz Tilberis, Grace Coddington, et al., gossiping by candlelight as they dined on poached salmon and millefeuilles. And there was, as always, the family: Gianni, after two shows looking not tired so much as linear, like a head on a Greek coin; Donatella, with platinum hair extensions gleaming against a siren's sea-green evening dress, one of the least beautiful women in the room and yet, through some mysterious charisma, the most compelling; Santo, the financial brother, a cerebral version of Gianni; Antonio D'Amico, who is known in the family as Uncle Antonio, and who designs Versace Sport; Paul Beck, Donatella's American husband, who has the good looks of a Dartmouth jock, and manages Versace advertising; Allegra Beck, Donatella's daughter, a seraphic twelve-year-old who sat talking to the models with the composure of an infanta. The atmosphere went beyond the usual fashion-world clubbiness to a denser mixture of professionalism and intimacy, as if everyone in the room were somehow related to Gianni Versace.

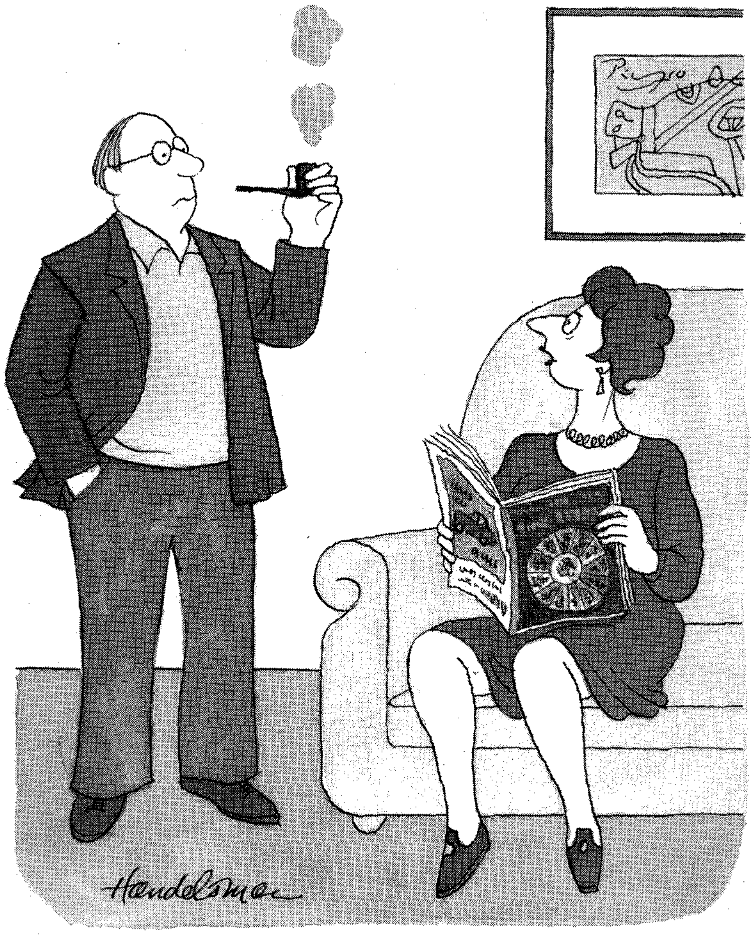
"Gianni had the talent, but there was never just Gianni," a Milanese knitwear manufacturer had told me a few weeks before the Paris shows. "*Da buoni meridionali*"—in good Southern Italian style—"the family stuck together from the beginning. In Italy, big success in business comes about from the united work of either a couple or a family group. Armani had Galeotti"—Sergio Galeotti, his business manager and companion, now deceased—"and from the time Gianni started making a little money, in the early seventies, the three Versaces were in business. Donatella, even when she was still in school, helped Gianni on the fashion side, but it was Santo who put them on a solid basis that allowed them to grow so fast. He found the investors, in Milan and down in Reggio Calabria. The smartest thing they did was to invest in real estate in the center of Milan before the prices took off. After they bought their first store, in the late seventies, they began, very quietly, to buy up most of the stores on Via della Spiga, which Santo believed had a great future. They bought the stores and then the showrooms on the upstairs floors, and you wouldn't believe what they were worth even five years later. That part wasn't fashion—it was brilliant financial strategy."

At the Paris party, I watched Allegra Versace Beck talking



"His first words were 'Been there, done that.'"

confidingly with Naomi Campbell, as if to a big sister, and I reflected on what a peculiar life Allegra and her six-year-old brother, Daniel, were leading. Their Uncle Gianni adored them in a natural continuation of the intense rapport he shared with Donatella. Their father, Paul Beck, was a close friend (some say a lover, though he has denied it) of Versace's before marrying his sister, and his niece and nephew were the nearest thing that the designer had to children of his own. He saw them as his heirs: in New York he spoke to me of his pleasure in thinking that the paintings he was collecting would one day go to Daniel and Allegra. They are the emotional center of the family empire, and they live by Versace rules. Although their existence contains the commonplaces of life for upper-class Milanese kids—English nannies, an English-speaking education at a British school, ski holidays in St. Moritz, vacations in Florida—they are not kept invisible, like most Italian millionaires' children. Instead, they are a prominent part of the many-headed company image.



"You can access me by saying simply 'Agnes.' It is not necessary to add 'dot com.' "

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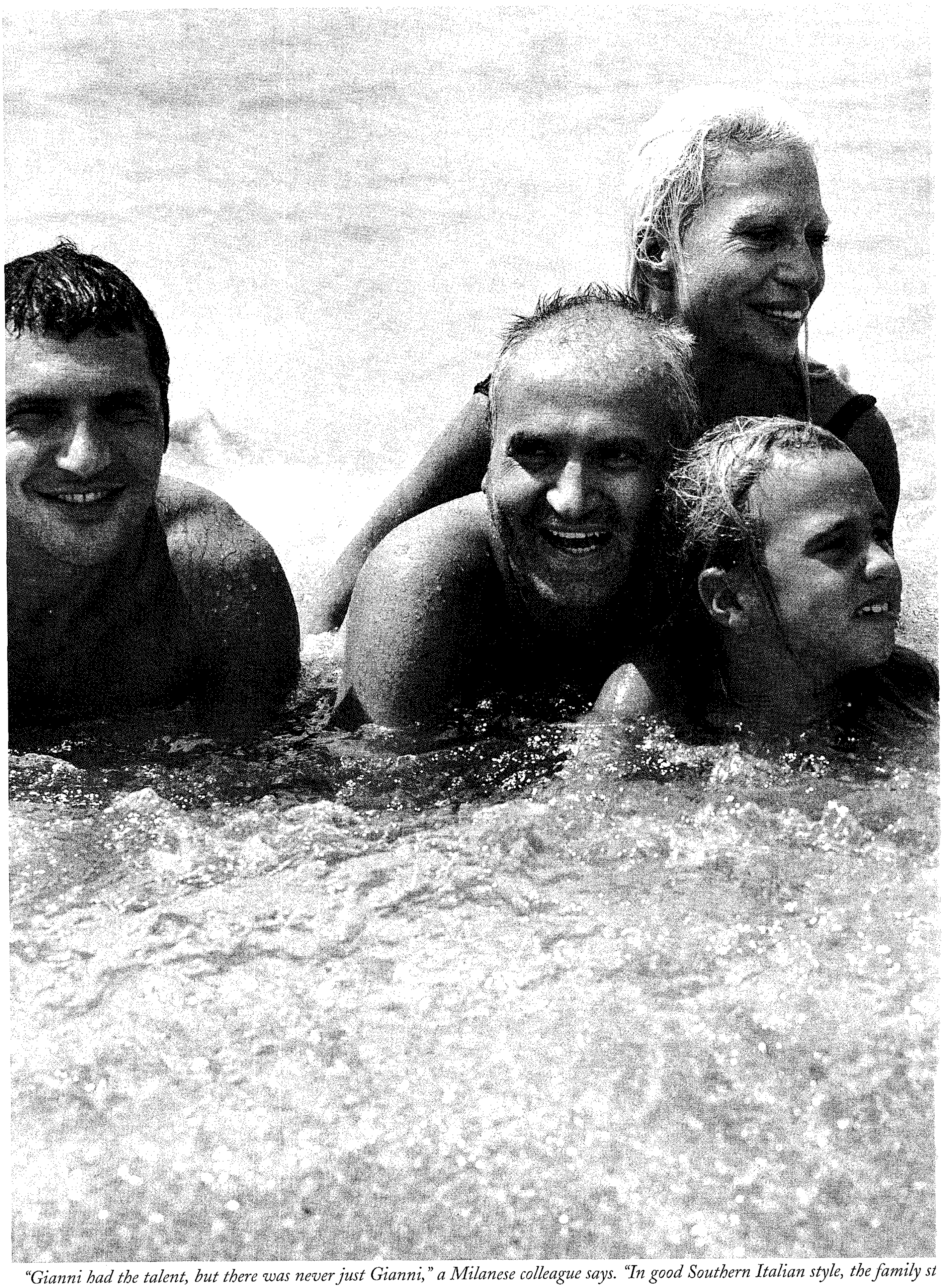
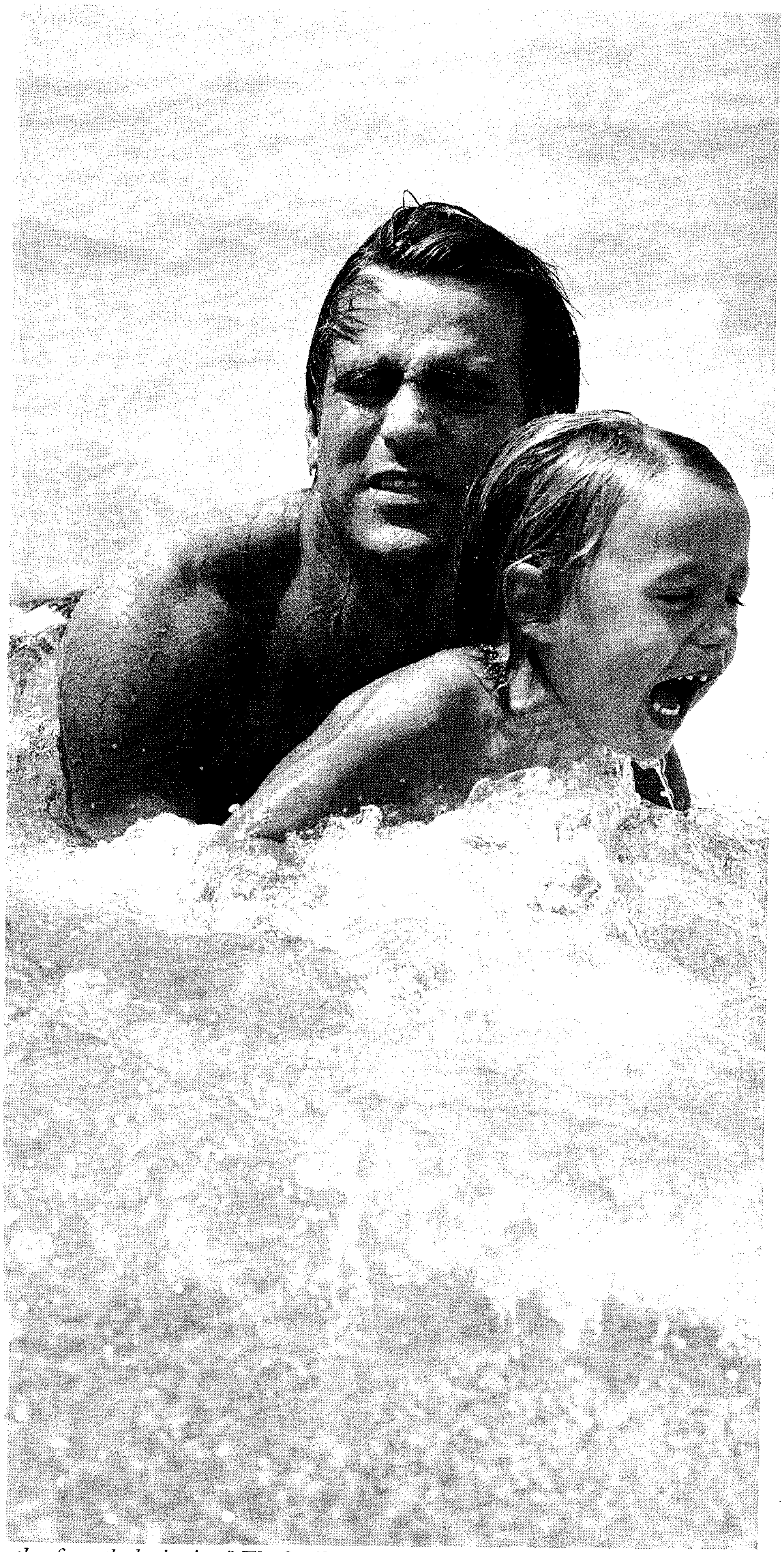
One full-page magazine ad for Versace l'Homme, one of the products in Versace's multimillion-dollar perfume company, shows the adorable young Daniel Beck, in a soaked bathing suit and with wet hair, leaning confidingly toward his father, who is seated in a chair draped with a Versace-print towel. What kind of parents, I wondered, would be happy to use their children's beauty to sell their products? Parents who market their own faces, which the Versaces have done with more insistence than any other fashion designers. Donatella was the original face of the Versace women's fragrance Blonde, and Allegra and Daniel themselves have their faces on the labels of the Versace children's fragrance, Baby Jeans. The glossy Versace picture books are, in a sense, family albums, with photographs of the Beck children scattered among those of celebrities and gorgeous models dressed and undressed, along with the pictures of their father and their mother and Uncle Gianni, Uncle Santo, Uncle Antonio, and even Grandmother Franca; "Do Not Disturb," a visual celebration of Versace's houses in Italy, has a section, entitled "The Home of Allegra and Daniel," that portrays the pastel-silk-and-ormolu-filled rooms that the Beck family inhabits in Milan. Between the books and the endless magazine spreads, the Versaces have become the most frequently photographed fashion clan of the decade, as visible as the Benettons were in the eighties; the Italian press refers to them, rather snidely, as "*ipermediatizzati*"—ultra-media-ized. Sometimes, looking at the photographs of the children, one feels repelled. At other times, it seems that the Versace approach is just an upscale version of the Italian *bottega* and *famiglia* mentality: the small shopkeeper's habit of mixing family and business until you can't distinguish one from the other. Perhaps the most peculiar thing of all is that at the heart of the whole bizarre ménage one senses a profound, unfeigned harmony—an equilibrium that allowed Versace, his lover, his sister, her husband, and all the people connected to them to get on with their lives and their work. It's an extreme example of the phenomenal power of the Italian family to absorb any eccentricity without falling apart.

"OUR family has always been close," Donatella Versace told me in Milan, a few weeks after the Paris shows. "There was always Santo, the calm one; Gianni, the enfant terrible; and me—Gianni's accomplice." The January haute-couture buzz had receded into the mists of antiquity, and the Via Gesù headquarters was already buzzing with preparations for the winter '97 prêt-à-porter. Even in the well-insulated luxury of Gianni Versace's Milan apartment, there was the tingle of a hive—a sense of the seamstresses working on the floor above and of the bustling design studios below. And much of the energy at the center of all this was clearly radiating from this tiny tanned woman with the Jayne Mansfield hair and the basilisk gaze.

In the business, it's been a given for years that to understand Gianni you had



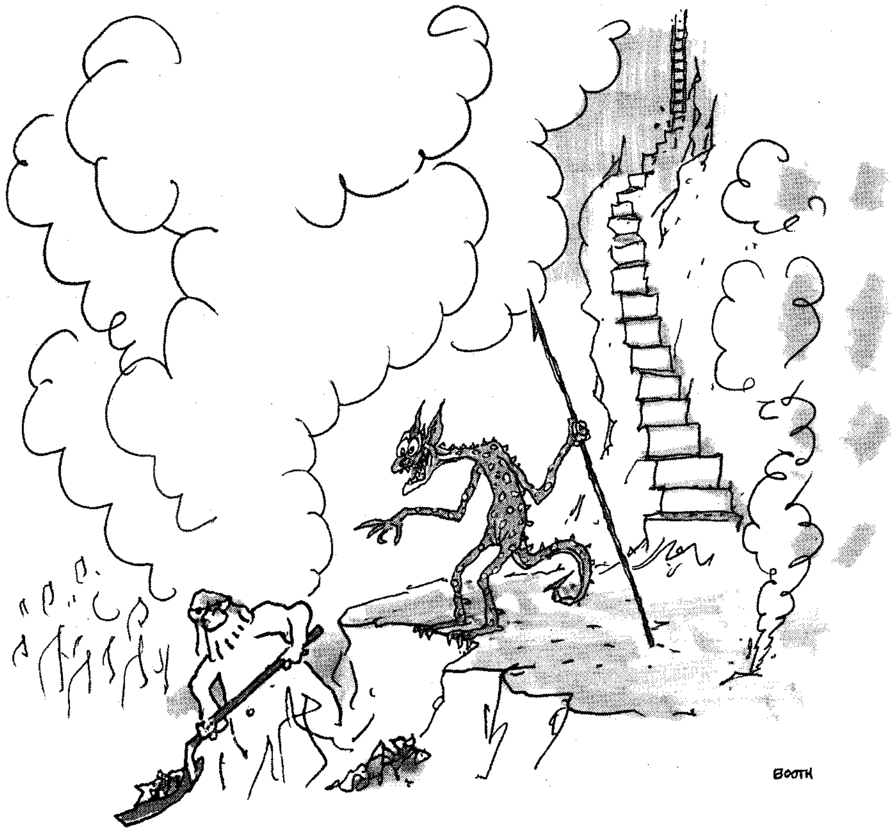
"Gianni had the talent, but there was never just Gianni," a Milanese colleague says. "In good Southern Italian style, the family st



ether from the beginning." The family photographed by Bruce Weber in Miami, 1994.

to know Donatella. She's the head of the trendy Versus line, and she was always her brother's right hand, but she is also the feminine impulse of the company that grew out of Versace's vision. She seems to have come from within Gianni, like a rib taken from his side; he often told journalists that she was his ideal woman. Donatella has been married for fourteen years, and calls Paul Beck her best friend, but she has always made it clear that the most important person in her life was Gianni. An Avedon photo that was given out as part of a standard press kit shows the three Versace siblings: Gianni reaching out an arm to encircle Donatella in a romantic gesture that is half protective, half possessive, while Santo stands apart. No one is interested in Santo the financier, nobody says, "Go talk to Santo": the company was all about Santo's younger sister and brother. Donatella told me that she was ten years younger than Gianni, yet when they were in the same room one was struck by the spooky electricity that flowed between them—the kind that links twins.

"I could do anything but lie to Gianni," Donatella told me, pushing back her hair. Dressed in a sleeveless shift, without makeup, her only jewel a ring with a diamond as big as Calabria, she resembled a classic "*donna manager*," or Italian professional woman. (Outside the office, however, she favors a steamroller type of Euroglamour. A friend of mine saw her take Allegra ice-skating early one morning at a rink in St. Moritz: surrounded by four crew-cut bodyguards, each clutching a cellular phone, Donatella was wearing a black cat suit, a gold ski jacket, and diamond bracelets from wrist to elbow.) She said that the most important thing she did every day, after sending her children off to school and working out with her trainer, was to check in with her brother. "All day long, we do fittings together; we work on the collection; we talk about Versus, accessories, children's wear; and then, after appointments, we have lunch together. We sit down at the table, and we talk about new projects. We don't agree on everything, but our great strength is that we are brother and sister, and so I can tell Gianni what I think. With Gianni it's hard, because



"By the way, HarperCollins decided your book did not warrant publication."

• •

with such an important person people tend to say always '*Sì.*' But he accepts the truth from me."

She smoked while she talked, in the Calabrian accent that had mostly disappeared from her brother's speech. As she described her trips to London and New York, where she haunts the clubs to listen to music and look at clothes, she seemed smart and tough, with a disarming warmth familiar to me from Roman and Neapolitan women I know—women who believe in flash and flesh, and have developed their dress code in accordance with the simple tribal law that fiscal worth must be displayed on the body. But when she returned to the subject of Gianni her voice became intense and curiously mechanical, as if she were reciting a litany. "He's a genius and, like all geniuses, he has a difficult personality," she said. "He doesn't do things halfway. What I admire about him as a designer is that he has always taken risks. He never leaned on secure things, even when he became 'Gianni Versace.' "

I asked her whether she liked being photographed, and she shook her head with a convincing grimace of distaste. "I detest it!" she said, adding, "But if it's good for the business . . ." It was clear that she knew she was taking part in constructing a fantasy. Her role in "Gianni Versace" was that of the usual feminine icon: the embodiment of all the money and celebrity and sex. She had to be blonder than anyone else, and covered with jewels the way statues of the Virgin used to be in Sicilian churches. She is forty years old and has close-set eyes and a sturdy, short-legged body that seems made to be swathed in Italian peasant black instead of couture silk, but her vamp photographs—like the recent Herb Ritts portrait of her in *Vanity Fair*, rising nude from the waves in a sort of Plexiglas egg, like a cross between Botticelli's "Venus" and Barbarella—are such masterworks of lighting and makeup and retouching, and convey such an intense desire for seductiveness, that one ends by halfway believing in her beauty. But whose desire was it, finally: Donatella's or her brother's? She was the gay man's version of a trophy wife—a trophy sister, which can be a far more intimate relationship. The dimmest spectator could discern that Donatella's diva mode was half Gianni in drag.

WHEN Versace entered the room, looking as happily pagan as ever in a dark-purple shirt and pants and a green cashmere sweater, he and Donatella chatted for a minute, communicating in shorthand, each pulling thoughts out of the other's head. Then Versace and I sat down with cups of tea in the library, which opens onto a marble terrace overlooking one of the lovely hidden gardens that stretch between the bustling designer shops of Via della Spiga and those of Via Montenapoleone, and discussed the celebrity flap of the week: how Versace's star client, Princess Diana, had shied away from endorsing Versace's latest book, "Rock and Royalty," and from attending an arch-glamorous publication benefit planned by Versace and Elton John. And how Versace had recouped by cancelling the party and paying out of his own pocket the equivalent of the profits that the benefit would have brought in to the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

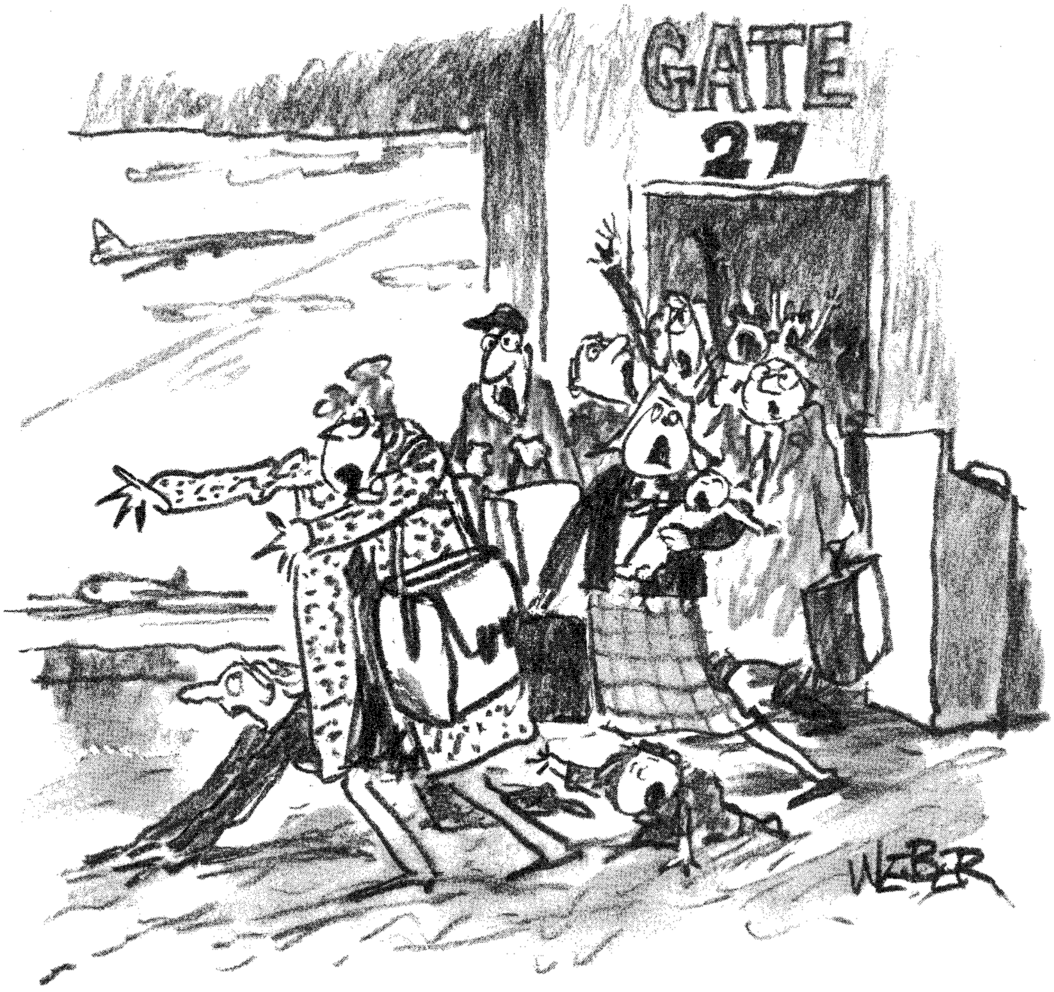
"Diana was a bit afraid of the reaction of the press," he said, in a voice as studiedly tranquil as that of a parent discussing a minor problem a child is having at school. "And it seemed that, given our friendship, the right thing to do was to help her get out of the impasse. So we decided to cancel the party. She was worried. She said, 'Maybe they'll attack me, because I'm in the middle of all those men in underpants.' 'Well, the book is what it is,' I told her. 'There's also Picasso in the book, there is Mozart, there is my family—there is everything that makes up the world. To be shocked by a man in underpants—I mean, we're in the year 2000!' " He shook his head and put down his teacup. "We stayed on good terms. Right now, we're making her some clothes in the atelier. I always try to create a rapport in which people feel protected. I preferred to act like a friend, because it would have been too easy to act like a *stronzo*—like an asshole. The whole thing was resolved cleanly. *Tak!*" He chopped the air with his hand to show how efficiently the situation had been resolved, and as he did so a glint in his eye made it clear just how much the whole thing had counted for him. A grand evening, with the Princess of Wales as the cynosure, a princess dressed by Versace, presenting Versace's book—that would have been a high point even in a career devoted to the worship of celebrity. "Rock and Royalty," which is meant to be a lighthearted, iconoclastic look at various types of human greatness—a sort of jumble sale of great lineage, great achievements, and great pectorals—actually displays an astonishing amount of wistful snobbery masked as whimsy. The inevitable Versace family pictures and fashion pinups are placed among pictures of legendary artists and rock musicians and hereditary aristocrats, as if simple propinquity could breed equality. On one page, set strategically facing an official portrait of Princess Diana with her two young sons, is a not at all ironic Snowdon portrait of the three Versace siblings in a formal dynastic pose. The ultimate impression left by the book is the opposite of the stylish, irreverent romp that is intended: it conveys a diehard infatuation with rank and power and a tremendous yearning for status that was, it seems, a motivating factor in Versace's success. "He always dreamed of being a kind of Medici prince," Richard Martin said after Versace was killed. "You look at the houses, you look at the life style—the unmitigated sumptuousness—and he *was* a Medici prince for the nineteen-eighties and nineties."

Before I left, Versace and I talked about his extensive work in theatrical-costume design, especially his collaborations with Maurice Béjart, with whom he had worked on eight or nine ballets. He said that the moment he felt most completely that he had made it was not at a fashion show but when he first saw his costumes onstage, eleven years ago, at the première of Béjart's "Malraux; ou La Métamorphose des Dieux." "I cried that night," he remarked, sounding faintly surprised.

Then I asked him what he would change about his life if he were able to. He poured himself another cup of tea and stared off through the terrace door, where it was getting dark over the hidden gardens of Milan. "It would be the passing of time," he said after a minute. "I'd like to live forever. If there's anything I'm afraid of, it's missing what will happen tomorrow. I'm very curious. I want to see what's going to be on the cover of *Time*, who is going to be Man of the Year for another year, the new scientific discoveries. I want to see my nieces and nephews grow up—see their children. I won't miss being young, because we all know we'll be old in twenty or thirty years. But one day I'll miss the people I love. I get crazy at the idea that a time will come when I won't see Daniel and Allegra anymore."

THE final view I had of Versace was an indirect one, on a Sunday morning when I was taking a walk through the center of Milan and caught sight of an Italian couple standing in front of the grand marble Versace shop on the corner of Via Montenapoleone. They were a modest-looking pair, who had clearly come in from their small town for a Sunday look at the shops: the man, in his fifties, was wearing a careful suit and tie; the woman, a few years younger, was a plump bleached blonde in navy blue and too high heels. They could have been Gianni and Donatella in another life. In the window nearest them was a spectacular beaded green evening gown—a design that was worn by Madonna to the opening of "Evita" and had been displayed in every fashion magazine on the planet. The way they stared at it, as if it were a movie poster, clarified something about Versace: at the heart of his brash vision of high life lay a naïve and strangely touching provincialism. These were the kind of people he came from, and these are the people who wholeheartedly adore his style of success, because he made their own style of dream come true.

"*È Versace! Quant'è bello!* How beautiful!" the woman sighed. Her husband rubbed the fingers of one hand together in the gesture that Italians use to indicate wealth. "You need money just to walk in the door," he said, with a respectful nod at the entrance, where mosaic Medusa heads stare blindly up at the sky. "You have to be a star." ♦



"Food! Food!"

ANNALS OF STYLE

LISTENING TO KHAKIS

What America's most popular pants tell us about the way guys think.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

IN the fall of 1987, Levi Strauss & Co. began running a series of national television commercials to promote Dockers, its new brand of men's khakis. All the spots—and there were twenty-eight—had the same basic structure. A handheld camera would follow a group of men as they sat around a living room or office or bar. The men were in their late thirties, but it was hard to tell, because the camera caught faces only fleetingly. It was trained instead on the men from the waist down—on the seats of their pants, on the pleats of their khakis, on their hands going in and out of their pockets. As the camera jumped in quick cuts from Docker to Docker, the men chatted in loose, overlapping non sequiturs—guy-talk fragments that, when they are rendered on the page, achieve a certain Dadaist poetry. Here is the entire transcript of "Poolman," one of the first—and, perhaps, best—ads in the series:

> "She was a redhead about five foot six inches tall."
>
> "And all of a sudden this thing starts spinning, and it's going round and round."
>
> "Is that Nelson?"
>
> "And that makes me safe, because with my wife, I'll never be that way."
>
> "It's like your career, and you're frustrated. I mean that—that's—what you want."
>
> "Of course, that's just my opinion."
>
> "So money's no object."
>
> "Yeah, money's no object."
>
> "What are we going to do with our lives, now?"
>
> "Well . . ."
>
> "Best of all . . ."
>
> [Voice-over] *"Levi's one-hundred-per-cent-cotton Dockers. If you're not wearing Dockers, you're just wearing pants."*
>
> "And I'm still paying the loans off."
>
> "You've got all the money in the world."
>
> "I'd like to at least be your poolman."

By the time the campaign was over, at the beginning of the nineties, Dockers had grown into a six-hundred-million-dollar business—a brand that if it had spun off from Levi's would have been (and would still be) the fourth-largest clothing brand in the world. Today, seventy per cent of American men between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five own a pair of Dockers, and khakis are expected to be as popular as bluejeans by the beginning of the next century. It is no exaggeration to call the original Dockers ads one of the most successful fashion-advertising campaigns in history.

This is a remarkable fact for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that the Dockers campaign was aimed at men, and no one had ever thought you could hit a home run like that by trying to sell fashion to the American male. Not long ago, two psychologists at York University, in Toronto—Irwin Silverman and Marion Eals—conducted an experiment in which they had men and women sit in an office for two minutes, without any reading material or distraction, while they ostensibly waited to take part in some kind of academic study. Then they were taken from the office and given the real reason for the experiment: to find out how many of the objects in the office they could remember. This was not a test of memory so much as it was a test of awareness—of the kind and quality of unconscious attention that people pay to the particulars of their environment. If you think about it, it was really a test of fashion sense, because, at its root, this is what fashion sense really is—the ability to register and appreciate and *remember* the details of the way those around you look and dress, and then reinterpret those details and memories yourself.

When the results of the experiment were tabulated, it was found that the women were able to recall the name and the placement of seventy per cent more objects than the men, which makes perfect sense. Women's fashion, after all, consists of an endless number of subtle combinations and variations—of skirt, dress, pants, blouse, T-shirt, hose, pumps, flats, heels, necklace, bracelet, cleavage, collar, curl, and on and on—all driven by the fact that when a woman walks down the street she knows that other women, consciously or otherwise, will notice the name and the placement of what she is wearing. Fashion works for women because women can appreciate its complexity. But when it comes to men what's the point? How on earth do you sell fashion to someone who has no appreciation for detail whatsoever?

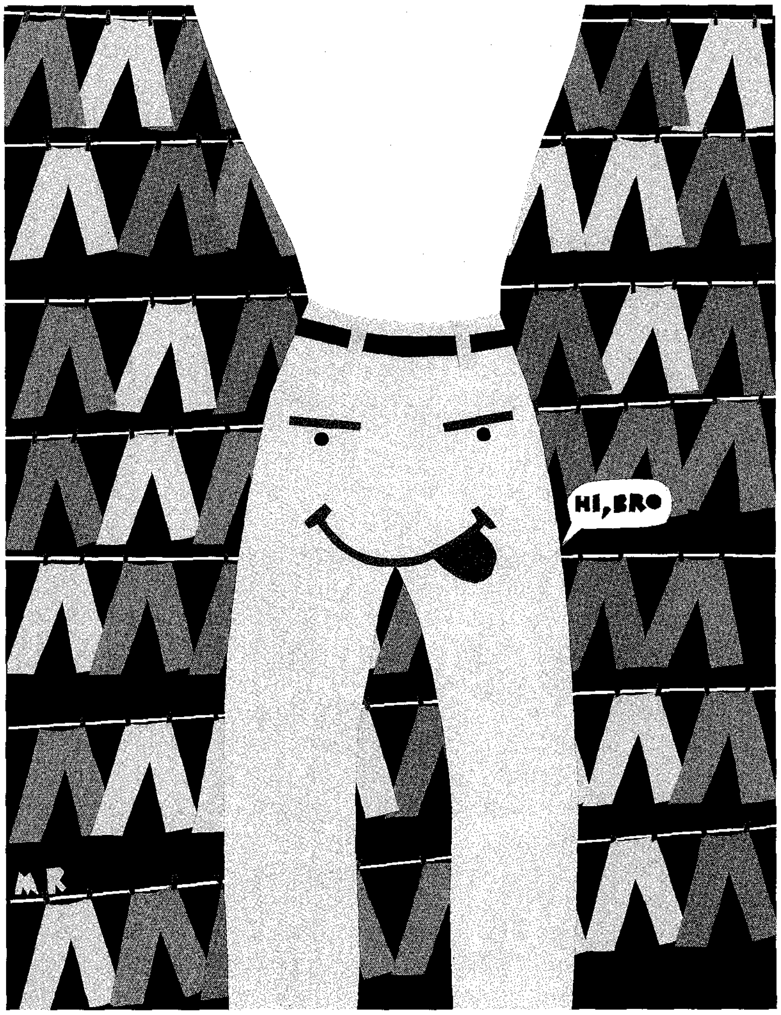
The Dockers campaign, however, proved that you could sell fashion to men. But that was only the first of its remarkable implications. The second—which remains as weird and mysterious and relevant to the fashion business today as it was ten years ago—was that you could do this by training a camera on a man's butt and having him talk in yuppie gibberish.

I WATCHED "Poolman" with three members of the new team handling the Dockers account at Foote, Cone & Belding (F.C.B.), Levi's ad agency. We were in a conference room at Levi's Plaza, in downtown San Francisco, a redbrick building decorated (appropriately enough) in khakilike earth tones, with the team members—Chris Shipman, Iwan Thomis, and Tanyia Kandohla—forming an impromptu critical panel. Shipman, who had thick black glasses and spoke in an almost inaudible laid-back drawl, put a videocassette of the first campaign into a VCR—stopping, starting, and rewinding—as the group analyzed what made the spots so special.

"Remember, this is from 1987," he said, pointing to the screen, as the camera began its jerky dance. "Although this style of filmmaking looks everyday now, that kind of handheld stuff was very fresh when these were made."

"They taped real conversations," Kandohla chimed in. "Then the footage was cut together afterward. They were thrown areas to talk about. It was very natural, not at all scripted. People were encouraged to go off on tangents."

After "Poolman," we watched several of the other spots in the original group—"Scorekeeper" and "Dad's Chair," "Flag Football," and "The Meaning of Life"—and I asked about the headlessness of the commercials, because if you watch too many in a row all those anonymous body parts begin to get annoying. But Thomis maintained that the headlessness was crucial, because it was the absence of faces that gave the dialogue its freedom. "They didn't show anyone's head because if they did the message would have too much weight," he said. "It would be too pretentious. You know, people talking about their hopes and dreams. It seems more genuine, as opposed to something stylized."



MICHAEL ROBERTS

The most striking aspect of the spots is how different they are from typical fashion advertising. If you look at men's fashion magazines, for example, at the advertisements for the suits of Ralph Lauren or Valentino or Hugo Boss, they almost always consist of a beautiful man, with something interesting done to his hair, wearing a gorgeous outfit. At the most, the man may be gesturing discreetly, or smiling in the demure way that a man like that might smile after, say, telling the supermodel at the next table no thanks he has to catch an early-morning flight to Milan. But that's all. The beautiful face and the clothes tell the whole story. The Dockers ads, though, are almost exactly the opposite. There's no face. The camera is jumping around so much that it's tough to concentrate on the clothes. And instead of stark simplicity, the fashion image is overlaid with a constant, confusing patter. It's almost as if the Dockers ads weren't primarily concerned with clothes at all—and in fact that's exactly what Levi's intended. What the company had discovered, in its research, was that baby-boomer men felt that the chief thing missing from their lives was male friendship. Caught between the demands of the families that many of them had started in the eighties and career considerations that had grown more onerous, they felt they had lost touch with other men. The purpose of the ads—the chatter, the lounging around, the quick cuts—was simply to conjure up a place where men could put on one-hundred-per-cent-cotton khakis and reconnect with one another. In the original advertising brief, that imaginary place was dubbed Dockers World.

This may seem like an awfully roundabout way to sell a man a pair of pants. But that was the genius of the campaign. One of the truisms of advertising is that it's always easier to sell at the extremes than in the middle, which is why the advertisements for Valentino and Hugo Boss are so simple. The man in the market for a thousand-dollar suit doesn't need to be convinced of the value of nice clothes. The man in the middle, though—the man in the market for a forty-dollar pair of khakis—does. In fact, he probably isn't comfortable buying clothes at all. To sell him a pair of pants you have to take him somewhere he *is* comfortable, and that was the point of Dockers World. Even the apparent gibberish of lines like " 'She was a redhead about five foot six inches tall.' / 'And all of a sudden this thing starts spinning, and it's going round and round.' / 'Is that Nelson?' " have, if you listen closely enough, a certain quintessentially guy-friendly feel. It's the narrative equivalent of the sports-highlight reel—the sequence of five-second film clips of the best plays from the day's basketball or football or baseball games, which millions of American men watch every night on television. This nifty couplet from "Scorekeeper," for instance—" 'Who remembers their actual first girlfriend?' / 'I would have done better, but I was bald then, too' "—is not nonsense but a twenty-minute conversation edited down to two lines. A man schooled in the highlight reel no more needs the other nineteen minutes and fifty-eight seconds of that exchange than he needs to see the intervening catch and throw to make sense of a sinking liner to left and a close play at the plate.

"Men connected to the underpinnings of what was being said," Robert Hanson, the vice-president of marketing for Dockers, told me. "These guys were really being honest and genuine and real with each other, and talking about their lives. It may not have been the truth, but it was the fantasy of what a lot of customers wanted, which was not just to be work-focussed but to have the opportunity to express how you feel about your family and friends and lives. The content was very important. The thing that built this brand was that we absolutely nailed the emotional underpinnings of what motivates baby boomers."

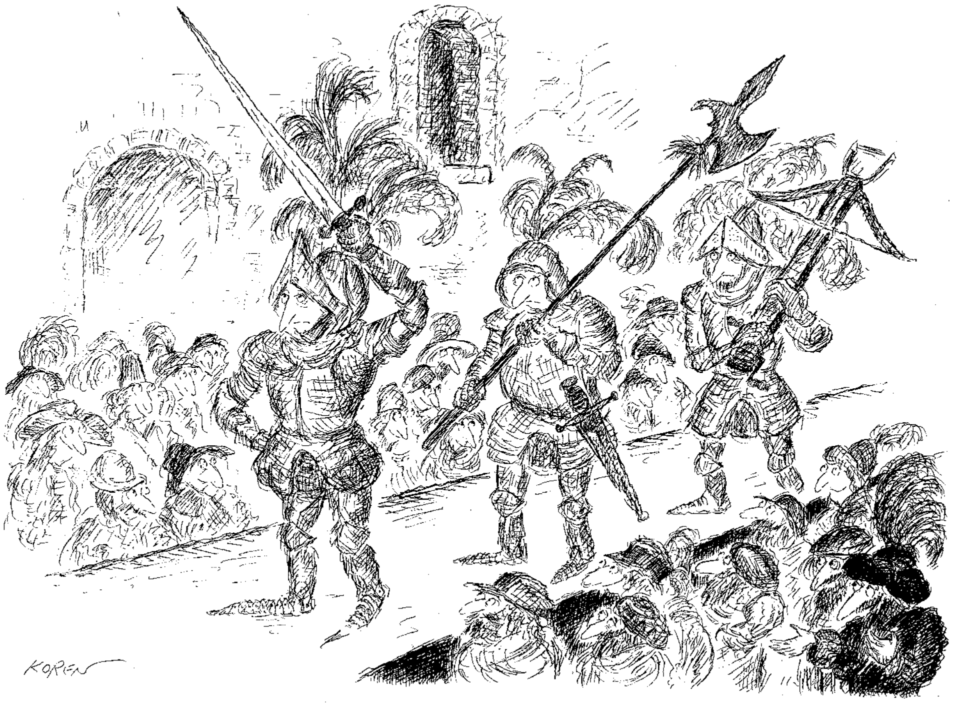
Hanson is a tall, striking man in his early thirties. He's what Jeff Bridges would look like if he had gone to finishing school. Hanson said that when he goes out on research trips to the focus groups that Dockers holds around the country he often deliberately stays in the background, because if the men in the group see him "they won't necessarily respond as positively or as openly." When he said this, he was wearing a pair of stone-white Dockers, a deep-blue shirt, a navy blazer, and a brilliant-orange patterned tie, and these worked so well together that it was obvious what he meant. When someone like Hanson dresses up that fabulously in Dockers, he makes it clear just how many variations and combinations are possible with a pair of khakis—but that, of course, defeats the purpose of the carefully crafted Dockers World message, which is to appeal to the man who wants nothing to do with fashion's variations and combinations. It's no coincidence that every man in every one of the group settings profiled in each commercial is wearing—albeit in different shades—*exactly the same kind of pants.* Most fashion advertising sells distinctiveness. (Can you imagine, say, an Ann Taylor commercial where a bunch of thirtyish girlfriends are lounging around chatting, all decked out in matching sweater sets?) Dockers was selling conformity.

"We would never do anything with our pants that would frighten anyone away," Gareth Morris, a senior designer for the brand, told me. "We'd never do too many belt loops, or an unusual base cloth. Our customers like one-hundred-per-cent-cotton fabrics. We would never do a synthetic. That's definitely in the market, but it's not where we need to be. Styling-wise, we would never do a wide, wide leg. We would never do a peg-legged style. Our customers seem to have a definite idea of what they want. They don't like tricky openings or zips or a lot of pocket flaps and details on the back. We've done button-through flaps, to push it a little bit. But we usually do a welt pocket—that's a pocket with a button-through. It's funny. We have focus groups in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, and whenever we show them a pocket with a flap—it's a simple thing—they hate it. They won't buy the pants. They complain, 'How do I get my wallet?' So we compromise and do a welt. That's as far as they'll go. And there's another thing. They go, 'My butt's big enough. I don't want flaps hanging off of it, too.' They like inseam pockets. They like to know where they put their hands." He gestured to the pair of experimental prototype Dockers he was wearing, which had pockets that ran almost parallel to the waistband of the pants. "This is a stretch for us," he said. "If you start putting more stuff on than we have on our product, you're asking for trouble."

The apotheosis of the notion of khakis as nonfashion-guy fashion came several years after the original Dockers campaign, when Haggar Clothing Co. hired the Goodby, Silverstein & Partners ad agency, in San Francisco, to challenge Dockers' khaki dominance. In retrospect, it was an inspired choice, since Goodby, Silverstein is Guy Central. It does Porsche ("Kills Bugs Fast") and Isuzu and the recent "Got Milk?" campaign and a big chunk of the Nike business, and it operates out of a gutted turn-of-the-century building downtown, refurbished in what is best described as neo-Erector set. The campaign that it came up with featured voice-overs by Roseanne's television husband, John Goodman. In the best of the ads, entitled "I Am," a thirtyish man wakes up, his hair all mussed, pulls on a pair of white khakis, and half sleepwalks outside to get the paper. "*I am not what I wear. I'm not a pair of pants, or a shirt,*" Goodman intones. The man walks by his wife, handing her the front sections of the paper. "*I'm not in touch with my inner child. I don't read poetry, and I'm not politically correct.*" He heads away from the kitchen, down a hallway, and his kid grabs the comics from him. "*I'm just a guy, and I don't have time to think about what I wear, because I've got a lot of important guy things to do.*" All he has left now is the sports section and, gripping it purposefully, he heads for the bathroom. "*One-hundred-per-cent-cotton wrinkle-free khaki pants that don't require a lot of thought. Haggar. Stuff you can wear.*"

"We softened it," Richard Silverstein told me as we chatted in his office, perched on chairs in the midst of—among other things—a lacrosse stick, a bike stand, a gym bag full of yesterday's clothing, three toy Porsches, and a giant model of a Second World War Spitfire hanging from the ceiling. "We didn't say 'Haggar Apparel' or 'Haggar Clothing.' We said, 'Hey, listen, guys, don't worry. It's just *stuff.* Don't worry about it.' The concept was 'Make it approachable.' " The difference between this and the Dockers ad is humor. F.C.B. assiduously documented men's inner lives. Goodby, Silverstein made fun of them. But it's essentially the same message. It's instructive, in this light, to think about the Casual Friday phenomenon of the past decade, the loosening of corporate dress codes that was spawned by the rise of khakis. Casual Fridays are commonly thought to be about men rejecting the uniform of the suit. But surely that's backward. Men started wearing khakis to work because Dockers and Haggar made it sound as if khakis were going to be even easier than a suit. The khakimakers realized that men didn't want to get rid of uniforms; they just wanted a better uniform.

The irony, of course, is that this idea of nonfashion—of khakis as the choice that diminishes, rather than enhances, the demands of fashion—turned out to be a white lie. Once you buy even the plainest pair of khakis, you invariably also buy a sports jacket and a belt and a whole series of shirts to go with it—maybe a polo knit for the weekends, something in plaid for casual, and a button-down for a dressier look—and before long your closet is thick with just the kinds of details and options that you thought you were avoiding. You may not add these details as brilliantly or as consciously as, say, Hanson does, but you end up doing it nonetheless. In the past seven years, sales of men's clothing in the United States have risen an astonishing twenty-one per cent, in large part because of this very fact—that khakis, even as they have simplified the bottom half of the male wardrobe, have forced a steady revision of the top. At the same time, even khakis themselves—within the narrow constraints of khakidom—have quietly expanded their range. When Dockers were launched, in the fall of 1986, there were just three basic styles: the double-pleated Docker in khaki, olive, navy, and black; the Steamer, in cotton canvas; and the more casual flat-fronted Docker. Now there are twenty-four. Dockers and Haggar and everyone else has been playing a game of bait and switch: lure men in with the promise of a uniform and then slip them, bit by bit, fashion. Put them in an empty room and then, ever so slowly, so as not to scare them, fill the room with objects.



"In my opinion, this is his best men's fall collection."

THERE is a puzzle in psychology known as the canned-laughter problem, which has a deeper and more complex set of implications about men and women and fashion and why the Dockers ads were so successful. Over the years, several studies have been devoted to this problem, but perhaps the most instructive was done by two psychologists at the University of Wisconsin, Gerald Cupchik and Howard Leventhal. Cupchik and Leventhal took a stack of cartoons (including many from *The New Yorker*), half of which an independent panel had rated as very funny and half of which it had rated as mediocre. They put the cartoons on slides, had a voice-over read the captions, and presented the slide show to groups of men and women. As you might expect, both sexes reacted pretty much the same way. Then Cupchik and Leventhal added a laugh track to the voice-over—the subjects were told that it was actual laughter from people who were in the room during the taping—and repeated the experiment. This time, however, things got strange. The canned laughter made the women laugh a little harder and rate the cartoons as a little funnier than they had before. But not the men. They laughed a bit more at the good cartoons but much more at the bad cartoons. The canned laughter also made them rate the bad cartoons as much funnier than they had rated them before, but it had little or no effect on their ratings of the good cartoons. In fact, the men found a bad cartoon with a laugh track to be almost as funny as a good cartoon without one. What was going on?

The guru of male-female differences in the ad world is Joan Meyers-Levy, a professor at the University of Chicago business school. In a groundbreaking series of articles written over the past decade, Meyers-Levy has explained the canned-laughter problem and other gender anomalies by arguing that men and women use fundamentally different methods of processing information. Given two pieces of evidence about how funny something is—their own opinion and the opinion of others (the laugh track)—the women came up with a higher score than before because they added the two clues together: they integrated the information before them. The men, on the other hand, picked one piece of evidence and ignored the other. For the bad cartoons, they got carried away by the laugh track and gave out hugely generous scores for funniness. For the good cartoons, however, they were so wedded to their own opinion that suddenly the laugh track didn't matter at all.

This idea—that men eliminate and women integrate—is called by Meyers-Levy the "selectivity hypothesis." Men are looking for a way to simplify the route to a conclusion, so they seize on the most obvious evidence and ignore the rest, while women, by contrast, try to process information comprehensively. So-called bandwidth research, for example, has consistently shown that if you ask a group of people to sort a series of objects or ideas into categories, the men will create fewer and larger categories than the women will. They use bigger mental bandwidths. Why? Because the bigger the bandwidth the less time and attention you have to pay to each individual object. Or consider what is called the invisibility question. If a woman is being asked a series of personal questions by another woman, she'll say more if she's facing the woman she's talking to than she will if her listener is invisible. With men, it's the opposite. When they can't see the person who's asking them questions, they suddenly and substantially open up. This, of course, is a condition of male communication which has been remarked on by women for millennia. But the selectivity hypothesis suggests that the cause of it has been misdiagnosed. It's not that men necessarily have trouble expressing their feelings; it's that in a face-to-face conversation they experience emotional overload. A man can't process nonverbal information (the expression and body language of the person asking him questions) and verbal information (the personal question being asked) at the same time any better than he can process other people's laughter and his own laughter at the same time. He has to select, and it is Meyers-Levy's contention that this pattern of behavior suggests significant differences in the way men and women respond to advertising.

Joan Meyers-Levy is a petite woman in her late thirties, with a dark pageboy haircut and a soft voice. She met me in the downtown office of the University of Chicago with three large folders full of magazine advertisements under one arm, and after chatting about the origins and the implications of her research she handed me an ad from several years ago for Evian bottled water. It has a beautiful picture of the French Alps and, below that, in large type, "Our factory." The text ran for several paragraphs, beginning:

> You're not just looking at the French Alps. You're looking at one of the most pristine places on earth. And the origin of Evian Natural Spring Water.
>
> Here, it takes no less than 15 years for nature to purify every drop of Evian as it flows through mineral-rich glacial formations deep within the mountains. And it is here that Evian acquires its unique balance of minerals.

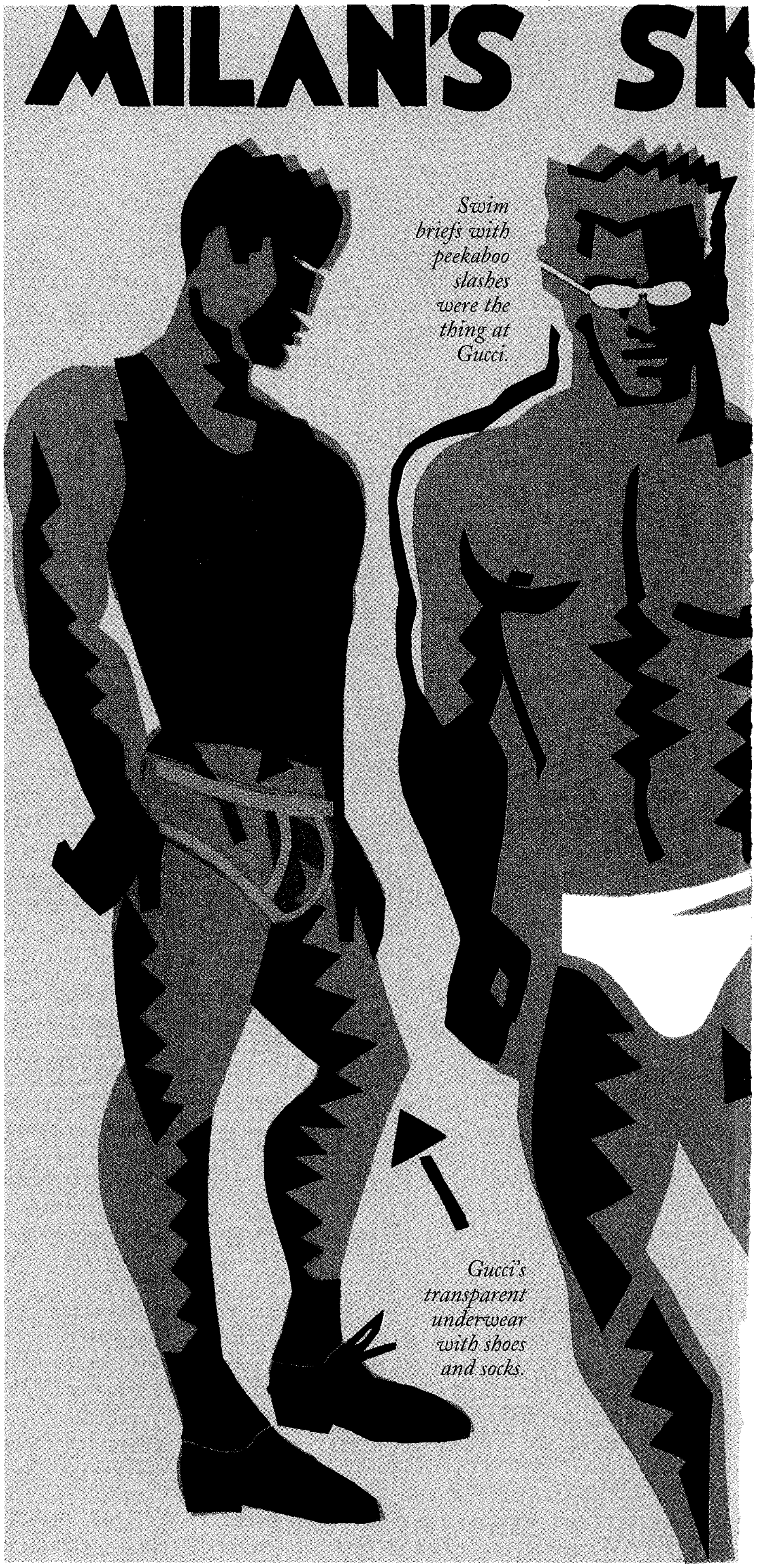
"Now, is that a male or a female ad?" she asked. I looked at it again. The picture baffled me. But the word "factory" seemed masculine, so I guessed male.

She shook her head. "It's female. Look at the picture. It's just the Alps, and then they label it 'Our factory.' They're using a metaphor. To understand this, you're going to have to engage in a fair amount of processing. And look at all the imagery they're encouraging you to build up. You're not just looking at the French Alps. It's 'one of the most pristine places on earth' and it will take nature 'no less than fifteen years' to purify." Her point was that this

A MENSWEAR PORTFOLIO

BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

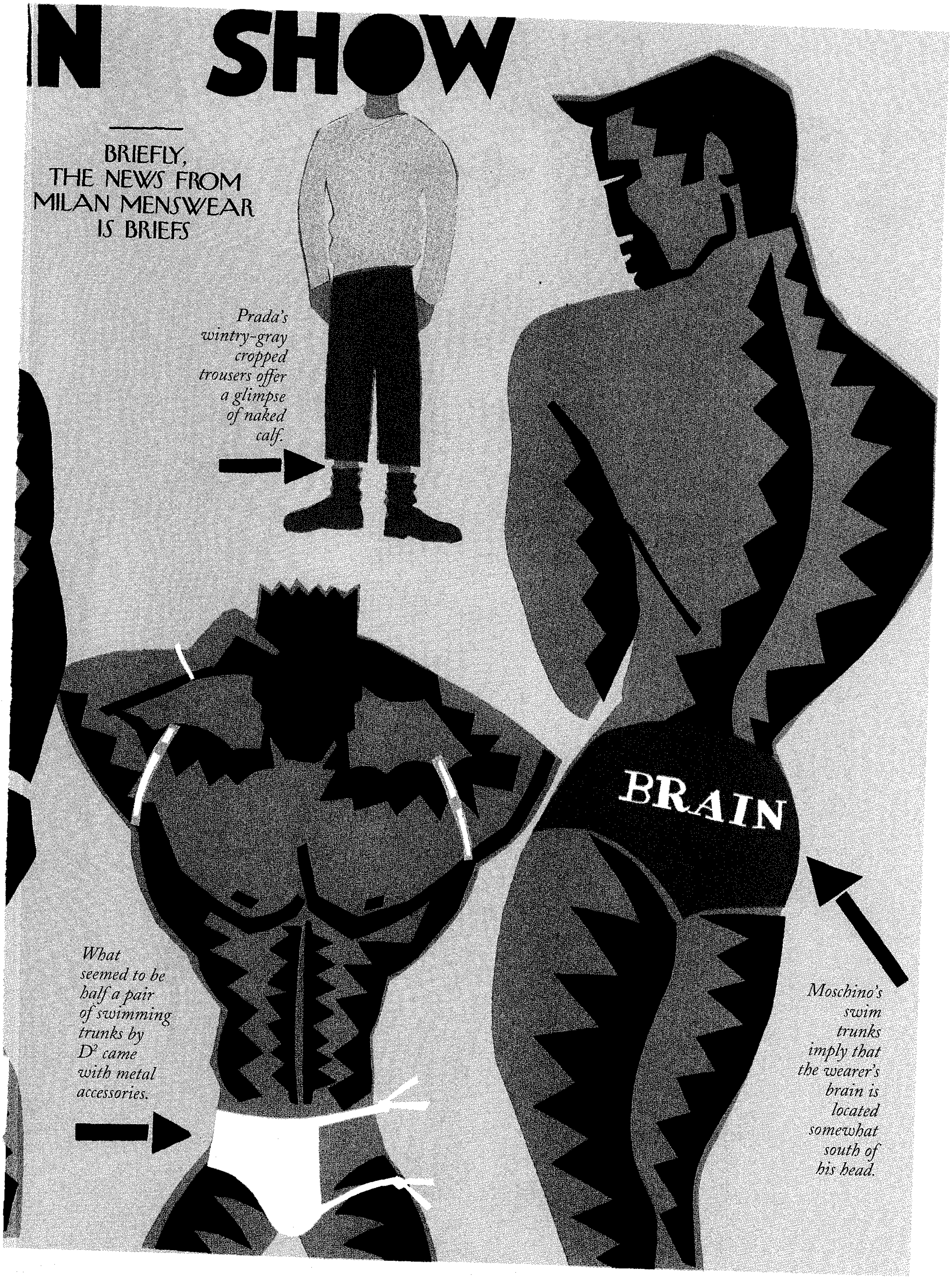
Reports from Milan and Paris on the collections for next spring and summer, along with previews of this week's shows in New York, begin here and continue on the following pages.



Swim briefs with peekaboo slashes were the thing at Gucci.

Gucci's transparent underwear with shoes and socks.

N SHOW

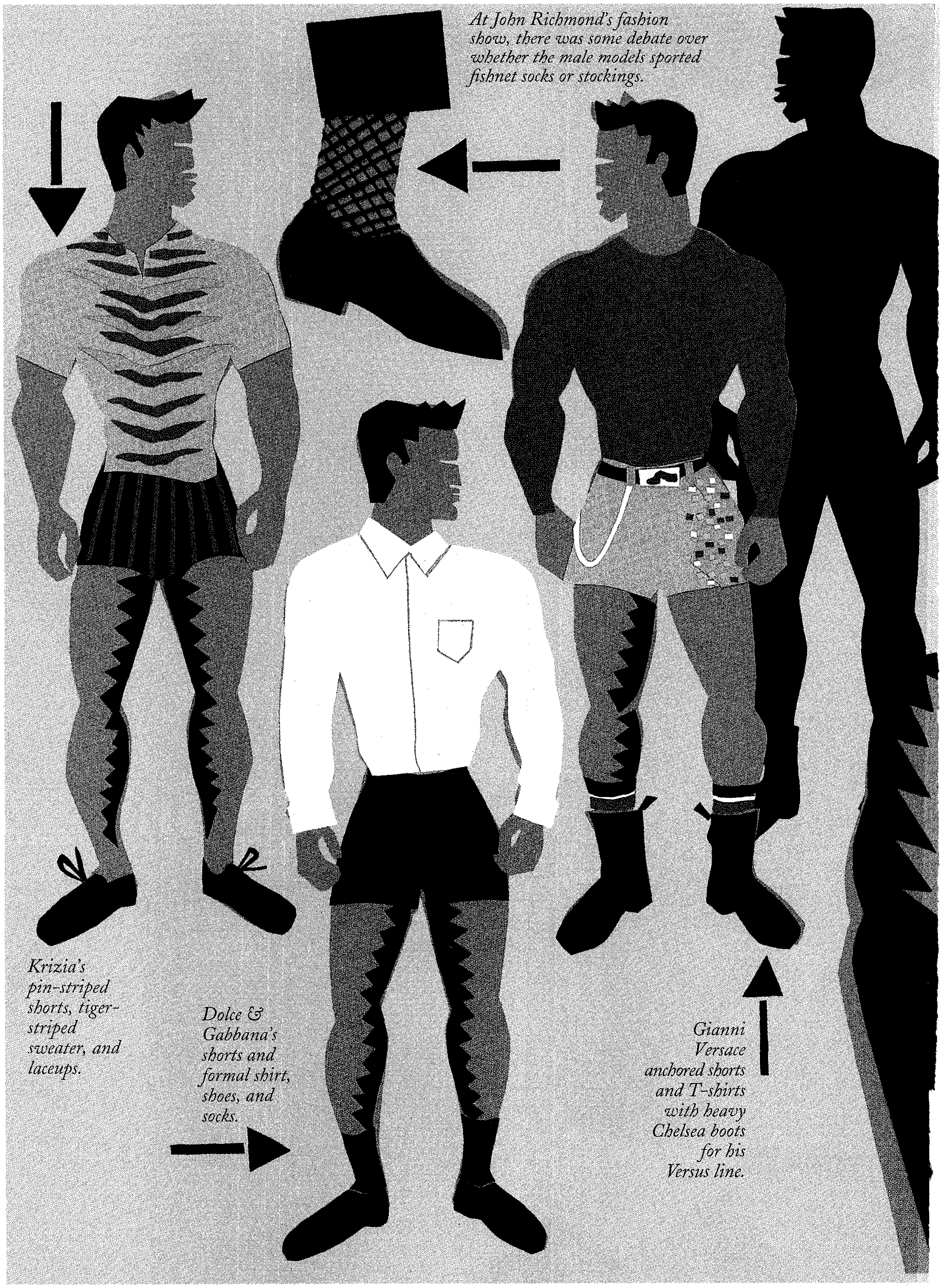


BRIEFLY, THE NEWS FROM MILAN MENSWEAR IS BRIEFS

Prada's wintry-gray cropped trousers offer a glimpse of naked calf.

What seemed to be half a pair of swimming trunks by D^2 came with metal accessories.

Moschino's swim trunks imply that the wearer's brain is located somewhat south of his head.



At John Richmond's fashion show, there was some debate over whether the male models sported fishnet socks or stockings.

Krizia's pin-striped shorts, tiger-striped sweater, and laceups.

Dolce & Gabbana's shorts and formal shirt, shoes, and socks.

Gianni Versace anchored shorts and T-shirts with heavy Chelsea boots for his Versus line.

SHORTS WITH HEAVY FOOTWEAR APPEAR TO BE A THEME FOR NEXT SUMMER
An Emporio design resembling a girl's camisole, by Giorgio Armani, displays more male cleavage than a conventional tank top.
Gianfranco Ferrè created a coverup touch by wrapping a bulky sweater around the waist of a model in a pareo.

is an ad that works only if the viewer appreciates all its elements—if the viewer integrates, not selects. A man, for example, glancing at the ad for a fraction of a second, might focus only on the words "Our factory" and screen out the picture of the Alps entirely, the same way he might have screened out the canned laughter. Then he wouldn't get the visual metaphor. In fact, he might end up equating Evian with a factory, and that would be a disaster. Anyway, why bother going into such detail about the glaciers if it's just going to get lost in the big male bandwidth?

Meyers-Levy handed me another Evian advertisement. It showed a man—the Olympic Gold Medal swimmer Matt Biondi—by a pool drinking Evian, with the caption "Revival of the fittest." The women's ad had a hundred and nineteen words of text. This ad had just twenty-nine words: "No other water has the unique, natural balance of minerals that Evian achieves during its 15-year journey deep within the French Alps. To be the best takes time." Needless to say, it came from a men's magazine. "With men, you don't want the fluff," she said. "Women, though, participate a lot more in whatever they are processing. By giving them more cues, you give them something to work with. You don't have to be so literal. With women you can be more allusive, so you can draw them in. They will engage in elaboration, and the more associations they make the easier it is to remember and retrieve later on."

Meyers-Levy took a third ad from her pile, this one for the 1997 Mercury Mountaineer four-wheel-drive sport-utility vehicle. It covers two pages, has the heading "Take the Rough with the Smooth," and shows four pictures—one of the vehicle itself, one of a mother and her child, one of a city skyline, and a large one of the interior of the car, over which the ad's text is superimposed. Around the border of the ad are forty-four separate, tiny photographs of roadways and buildings and construction sites and manhole covers. *Female.* Next to it on the table she put another ad—this one a single page, with a picture of the Mountaineer's interior, fifteen lines of text, a picture of the car's exterior, and, at the top, the heading: "When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Comfortable." *Male.* "It's details, details. They're saying lots of different stuff," she said, pointing to the female version. "With men, instead of trying to cover everything in a single execution, you'd probably want to have a whole series of ads, each making a different point."

After a while, the game got very easy—if a bit humiliating. Meyers-Levy said that her observations were not anti-male—that both the male and the female strategies have their strengths and their weaknesses—and, of course, she's right. On the other hand, reading the gender of ads makes it painfully obvious how much the advertising world—consciously or not—talks down to men. Before I met Meyers-Levy, I thought that the genius of the famous first set of Dockers ads was their psychological complexity, their ability to capture the many layers of eighties guyness. But when I thought about them again after meeting Meyers-Levy, I began to think that their real genius lay in their heroic simplicity—in the fact that F.C.B. had the self-discipline to fill the allotted thirty seconds with as *little* as possible. Why no heads? The invisibility rule. Guys would never listen to that Dadaist extemporizing if they had to process nonverbal cues, too. Why were the ads set in people's living rooms *and* at the office? Bandwidth. The message was that khakis were wide-bandwidth pants. And why were all the ads shot in almost exactly the same way, and why did all the dialogue run together in one genial, faux-philosophical stretch of highlight reel? Because of canned laughter. Because if there were more than one message to be extracted men would get confused.

In the early nineties, Dockers began to falter. In 1992, the company sold sixty-six million pairs of khakis, but in 1993, as competition from Haggar and the Gap and other brands grew fiercer, that number slipped to fifty-nine million six hundred thousand, and by 1994 it had fallen to forty-seven million. In marketing-speak, user reality was encroaching on brand personality; that is, Dockers were being defined by the kind of middle-aged men who wore them, and not by the hipper, younger men in the original advertisements. The brand needed a fresh image, and the result was the "Nice Pants" campaign currently being shown on national television—a campaign widely credited with the resurgence of Dockers' fortunes.

In one of the spots, "Vive la France," a scruffy young man in his early twenties, wearing Dockers, is sitting in a café in Paris. He's obviously a tourist. He glances up and sees a beautiful woman (actually, the supermodel Tatjana Patitz) looking right at him. He's in heaven. She starts walking directly toward him, and as she passes by she says, "*Beau pantalon.*" As he looks frantically through his French phrase book for a translation, the waiter comes by and cuffs him on the head: "Hey, she says, 'Nice pants.' " Another spot in the series, "Subway Love," takes place on a subway car in Chicago. He (a nice young man wearing Dockers) spots her (a total babe), and their eyes lock. Romantic music swells. He moves toward her, but somehow, in a sudden burst of pushing and shoving, they get separated. Last shot: she's inside the car, her face pushed up against the glass. He's outside the car, his face pushed up against the glass. As the train slowly pulls away, she mouths two words: "Nice pants."

It may not seem like it, but "Nice Pants" is as radical a campaign as the original Dockers series. If you look back at the way that Sansabelt pants, say, were sold in the sixties, each ad was what advertisers would call a pure "head" message: the pants were comfortable, durable, good value. The genius of the first Dockers campaign was the way it combined head and heart: these were all-purpose, no-nonsense pants that connected to the emotional needs of baby boomers. What happened to Dockers in the nineties, though, was that everyone started to do head and heart for khakis. Haggar pants were wrinkle-free (head) and John Goodman-guy (heart). The Gap, with its brilliant billboard campaign of the early nineties—"James Dean wore khakis," "Frank Lloyd Wright wore khakis"—perfected the heart message by forging an emotional connection between khakis and a particular nostalgic, glamorous all-Americanness. To reassert itself, Dockers needed to go an extra step. Hence "Nice Pants," a campaign that for the first time in Dockers history raises the subject of sex.

"It's always been acceptable for a man to be a success in business," Hanson said, explaining the rationale behind "Nice Pants." "It's always been expected of a man to be a good provider. The new thing that men are dealing with is that it's O.K. for men to have a sense of personal style, and that it's O.K. to be seen as sexy. It's less about the head than about the combination of the head, the heart, and the groin. It's those three things. That's the complete man."

The radical part about this, about adding the groin to the list, is that almost no other subject for men is as perilous as the issue of sexuality and fashion. What "Nice Pants" had to do was talk about sex the same way that "Poolman" talked about fashion, which was to talk about it by not talking about it—or, at least, to talk about it in such a coded, cautious way that no man would ever think Dockers was suggesting that he wear khakis in order to look *pretty*. When I took a videotape of the "Nice Pants" campaign to several of the top agencies in New York and Los Angeles, virtually everyone agreed that the spots were superb, meaning that somehow F.C.B. had managed to pull off this balancing act.

What David Altschiller, at Hill, Holliday/Altschiller, in Manhattan, liked about the spots, for example, was that the hero was naïve: in neither case did he know that he had on nice pants until a gorgeous woman told him so. Naïveté, Altschiller stressed, is critical. Several years ago, he did a spot for Claiborne for Men cologne in which a great-looking guy in a bar, wearing a gorgeous suit, was obsessing neurotically about a beautiful woman at the other end of the room: "*I see this woman. She's perfect. She's looking at me. She's smiling. But wait. Is she smiling at me? Or laughing at me? . . . Or looking at someone else?*" You'd never do this in an ad for women's cologne. Can you imagine? "I see this guy. He's perfect. Ohmigod. Is he looking at me?" In women's advertising, self-confidence is sexy. But if a man is self-confident—if he knows he is attractive and is beautifully dressed—then he's not a man anymore. He's a fop. He's effeminate. The cologne guy had to be neurotic or the ad wouldn't work. "Men are still abashed about acknowledging that clothing is important," Altschiller said. "Fashion can't be important to me as a man. Even when, in the first commercial, the waiter says 'Nice pants,' it doesn't compute to the guy wearing the nice pants. He's thinking, What do you mean, 'Nice pants'?" Altschiller was looking at a videotape of the Dockers ad as he talked—standing at a forty-five-degree angle to the screen, with one hand on the top of the monitor, one hand on his hip, and a small, bemused smile on his lips. "The world may think they are nice, but so long as he doesn't think so he doesn't have to be self-conscious about it, and the lack of self-consciousness is very important to men. Because '*I don't care.*' Or 'Maybe I care, but I can't be *seen* to care.' " For the same reason, Altschiller liked the relative understatement of the phrase "nice pants," as opposed to something like "great pants," since somewhere between "nice" and "great" a guy goes from just happening to look good to the unacceptable position of actually trying to look good. "In focus groups, men said that to be told you had 'nice pants' was one of the highest compliments a man could wish for," Tanyia Kandohla told me later, when I asked about the slogan. "They wouldn't want more attention drawn to them than that."

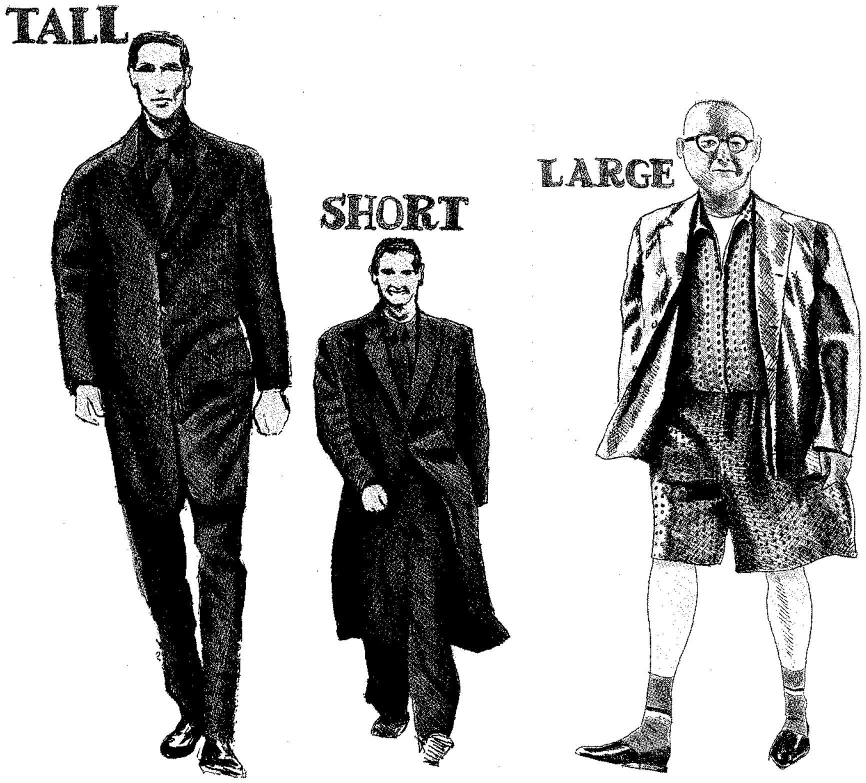
In many ways, the "Nice Pants" campaign is a direct descendant of the hugely successful campaign that Rubin-Postaer & Associates, in Santa Monica, did for Bugle Boy Jeans in the early nineties. In the most famous of those spots, the camera opens on an attractive but slightly goofy-looking man in a pair of jeans who is hitchhiking by the side of a desert highway. Then a black Ferrari with a fabulous babe at the wheel drives by, stops, and backs up. The babe rolls down the window and says, "Excuse me. Are those Bugle Boy Jeans that you're wearing?" The goofy guy leans over and pokes his head in the window, a surprised half smile on his face: "Why, yes, they *are* Bugle Boy Jeans."

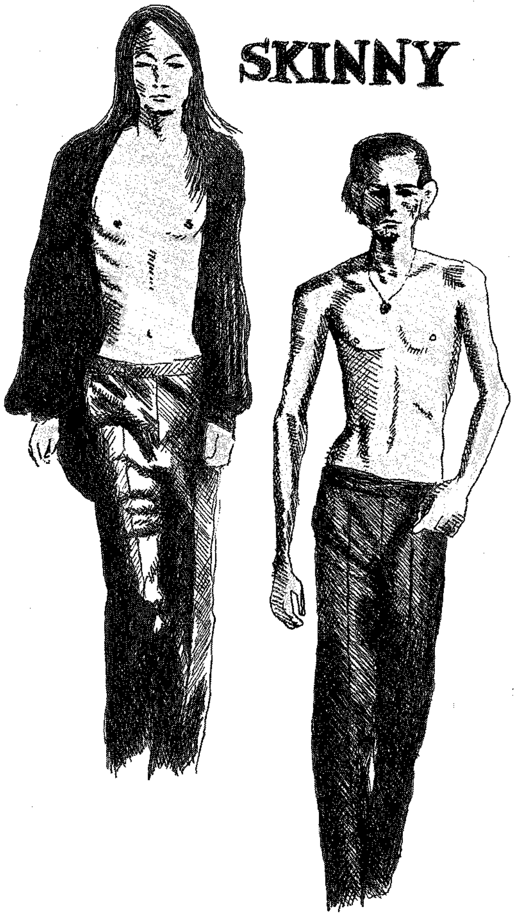
"Thank you," the babe says, and she rolls up the window and drives away.

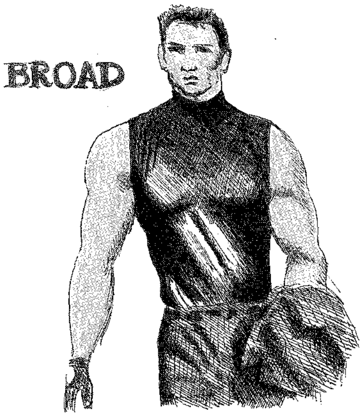
This is really the same ad as "Nice Pants"—the babe, the naïve hero, the punch line. The two ads have something else in common. In the Bugle Boy spot, the hero wasn't some stunning male model. "I think he was actually a boxboy at Vons in Huntington Beach," Larry Postaer, the creative director of Rubin-Postaer & Associates, told me. "I guess someone"—at Bugle Boy—"liked him." He's O.K.-looking, but not nearly in the same class as the babe in the Ferrari. In "Subway Love," by the same token, the Dockers man is medium-sized, almost

PARIS

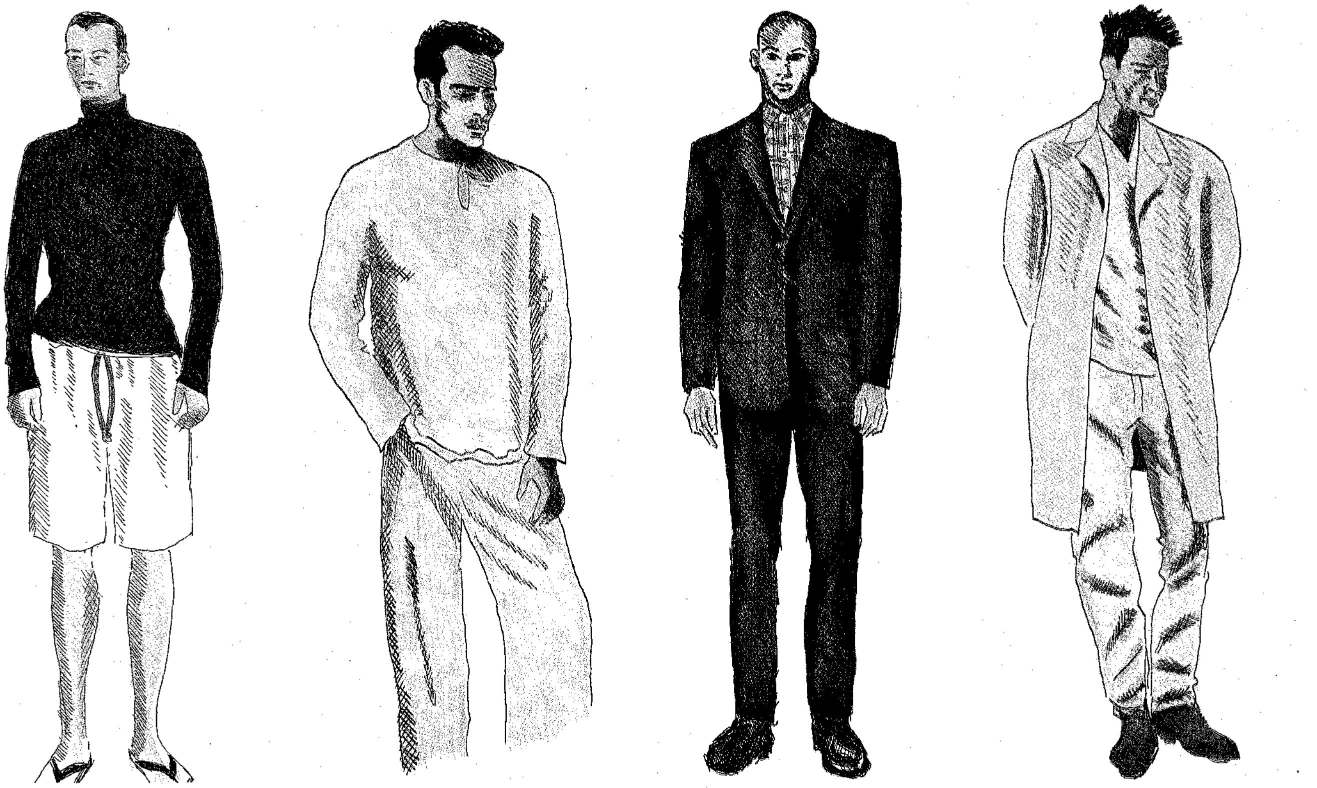
THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME







No muscle culture or body fascism from the designers in Paris, who showed next summer's menswear on a variety of physical types. Counterclockwise from top right: a rotund model in unstructured clothes from the Comme des Garçons Homme Plus collection; matching outfits on models with an excessive height difference at Yohji Yamamoto; two schoolboys from among scores bused to Paris by the Belgian designer Raf Simons to model his punky clothes; pneumatic shoulders have their day, courtesy of a cutaway top in thin black rubber by Thierry Mugler.



NEW YORK

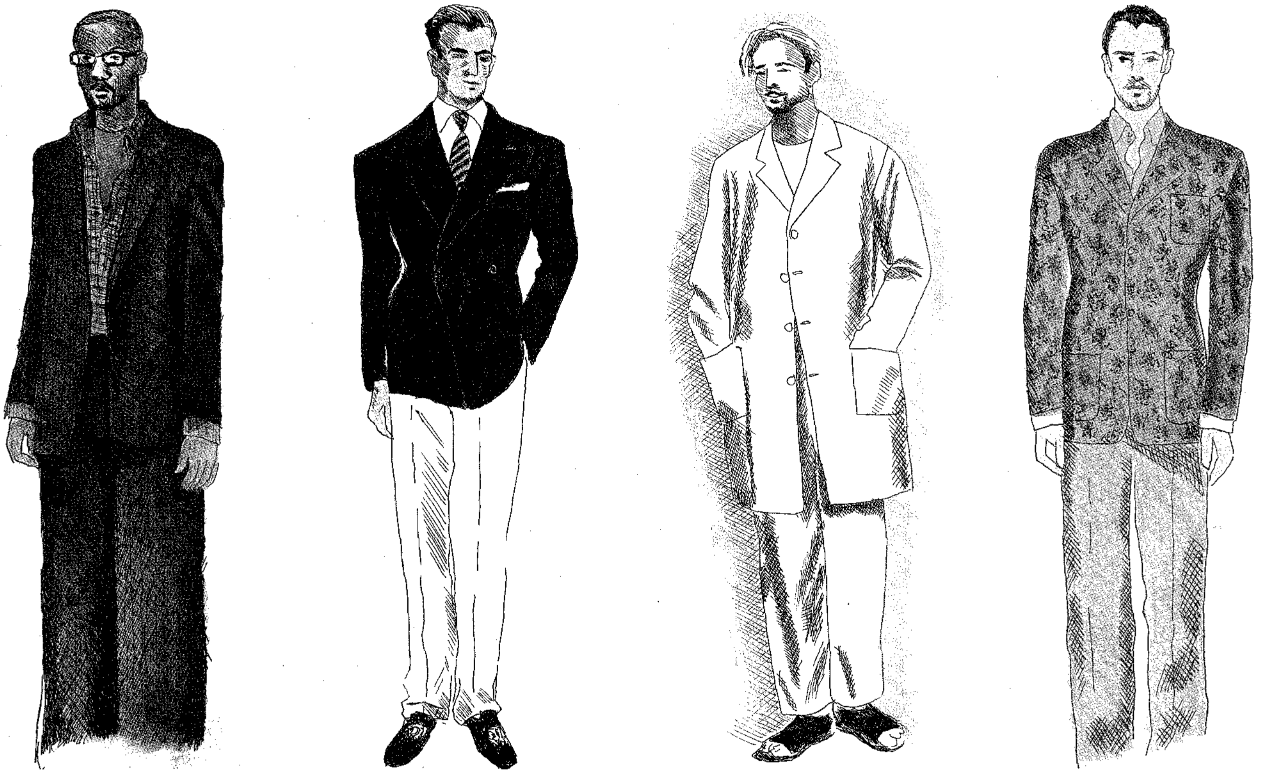
BAGGY COMES BACK

Those preoccupied with what's happening in men's trousers should know that current thinking among American designers involves words like "relaxed," "loose," and "drawstring waist." Bad news for anyone lately returned from Europe laden with trends in tight trousers. No news, however, to those who stayed home instead, quietly vegetating

small, and gets pushed around by much tougher people in the tussle on the train. He's cute, but he's a little bit of a wimp. Kandohla says that F.C.B. tried very hard to find someone with that look—someone who was, in her words, "aspirational real," not some "buff, muscle-bound jock." In a fashion ad for women, you can use Claudia Schiffer to sell a cheap pair of pants. But not in a fashion ad for men. The guy has to be *believable*. "A woman cannot be too gorgeous," Postaer explained. "A man, however, can be too gorgeous, because then he's not a man anymore. It's pretty rudimentary. Yet there are people who don't buy that, and have gorgeous men in their ads. I don't get it. Talk to Barneys about how well that's working. It couldn't stay in business trying to sell that high-end swagger to a mass market. The general public wouldn't accept it. Look at beer commercials. They always have these gorgeous girls—even now, after all the heat—and the guys are always just guys. That's the way it is. We only reflect what's happening out there, we're not creating it. Those guys who run the real high-end fashion ads—they don't understand that. They're trying to remold how people think about gender. I can't explain it, though I have my theories. It's like a Grecian ideal. But you can't be successful at advertising by trying to re-create the human condition. You can't alter men's minds, particularly on subjects like sexuality. It'll never happen."

Postaer is a gruff, rangy guy, with a Midwestern accent and a gravelly voice, who did Budweiser commercials in Chicago before moving West fifteen years ago. When he wasn't making fun of the pretentious style of East Coast fashion advertising, he was making fun of the pretentious questions of East Coast writers. When, for example, I earnestly asked him to explain the logic behind having the goofy guy screw up his face in such a—well, goofy—way when he says, "Why, yes, they *are* Bugle Boy Jeans," Postaer took his tennis shoes off his desk, leaned forward bemusedly in his chair, and looked at me as if my head came to a small point. "Because that's the only way he could say it," he said. "I suppose we might have had him say it a little differently if he could actually *act*."

Incredibly, Postaer said, the people at Bugle Boy wanted the babe to invite the goofy guy into the car, despite the fact that this would have violated the most important rule that governs this new style of groin messages in men's-fashion advertising, which is that the guy absolutely cannot *ever* get the girl. It's not just that if he got the girl the joke wouldn't work anymore; it's that if he got the girl it might look as if he had deliberately dressed to get the girl, and although at the back of every man's mind as he's dressing in the morning there is the thought of getting the girl, any open admission that that's what he's actually trying to do would undermine the whole unself-conscious, antifashion statement that men's advertising is about. If Tatjana Patitz were to say "*Beau garçon*" to the guy in "Vive la France," or the babe on the subway were to give the wimp her number, Dockers would suddenly become terrifyingly conspicuous—the long-pants equivalent of wearing a tight little Speedo to the beach. And if the Vons boxboy should actually get a ride from the Ferrari babe, the ad would suddenly become believable only to that thin stratum of manhood which thinks that women in Fer-



in their pajamas. From the left: Athletic baggies and cotton-knit sweater by Nautica's David Chu; Donna Karan's "Zen" look, in a color she calls crystal; Richard Edwards' cotton-canvas suit and checked shirt; Calvin Klein's ultra minimalism (no buttons, no cuffs) on a putty-colored suède coat; Gene Meyer's suit with twenty-three-inch-wide trouser legs; Ralph Lauren's latest trip down memory lane; DKNY's linen "lab coat" and karate-style trousers; Tommy Hilfiger's sanitized version of rock-and-roll dressing.

raris find twenty-four-dollar jeans irresistible. "We fought that tooth and nail," Postaer said. "And it more or less cost us the account, even though the ad was wildly successful." He put his tennis shoes back up on the desk. "But that's what makes this business fun—trying to prove to clients how wrong they are."

The one ad in the "Nice Pants" campaign which isn't like the Bugle Boy spots is called "Motorcycle." In it a nice young man happens upon a gleaming Harley on a dark back street of what looks like downtown Manhattan. He strokes the seat and then, unable to contain himself, climbs aboard the bike and bounces up and down, showing off his Dockers (the "product shot") but accidentally breaking a mirror on the handlebar. He looks up. The Harley's owner—a huge, leather-clad biker—is looking down at him. The biker glowers, looking him up and down, and says, "Nice pants." Last shot: the biker rides away, leaving the guy standing on the sidewalk in just his underwear.

What's surprising about this ad is that, unlike "Vive la France" and "Subway Love," it *does* seem to cross the boundaries of acceptable sex talk. The rules of guy advertising so carefully observed in those spots—the fact that the hero has to be naïve, that he can't be too good-looking, that he can't get the girl, and that he can't be told anything stronger than "Nice pants"—are all, in some sense, reactions to the male fear of appearing too concerned with fashion, of being too pretty, of not being masculine. But what is "Motorcycle"? It's an ad about a sweet-looking guy down in the Village somewhere who loses his pants to a butch-looking biker in leather. "I got so much feedback at the time of 'Well, God, that's kind of *gay*, don't you think?' " Robert Hanson said. "People were saying, 'This buff guy comes along and he rides off with the guy's pants. I mean, what the hell were they doing?' It came from so many different people within the industry. It came from some of our most conservative retailers. But do you know what? If you put these three spots up—'Vive la France,' 'Subway Love,' and 'Motorcycle'—which one do you think men will talk about ad nauseam? 'Motorcycle.' It's No. 1. It's because he's really cool. He's in a really cool environment, and it's every guy's fantasy to have a really cool, tricked-out fancy motorcycle."

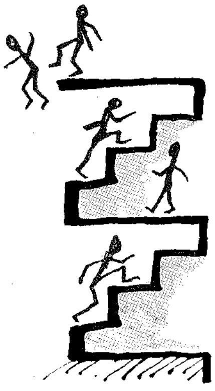
Hanson paused, as if he recognized that what he was saying was quite sensitive. He didn't want to say that men failed to pick up the gay implications of the ad because they're stupid, because they aren't stupid. And he didn't want to sound condescending, because Dockers didn't build a six-hundred-million-dollar business in five years by sounding condescending. All he was trying to do was point out the fundamental exegetical error in calling this a gay ad, because the only way for a Dockers man to be offended by "Motorcycle" would be if he thought about it with a little imagination, if he picked up on some fairly subtle cues, if he integrated an awful lot of detail. In other words, a Dockers man could only be offended if he did precisely what, according to Meyers-Levy, men don't do. It's not a gay ad because it's a guy ad. "The fact is," Hanson said, "that most men's interpretation of that spot is: You know what? Those pants must be really cool, because they prevented him from getting the shit kicked out of him." ♦

FICTION

WINKY

Does oatmeal hold the secret to our inner happiness?

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS



EIGHTY people waited in a darkened meeting room at the Hyatt wearing mass-produced paper hats. The White Hats were Beginning to Begin. The Pink Hats were Moving Ahead in Beginning. The Green Hats were Very Firmly Beginning, all the way up to the Gold Hats, who had Mastered Living and were standing in a group around the snack table, whispering and conferring and elbowing one another whenever someone in a lesser hat walked by.

Trumpets sounded from a concealed tape deck. An actor in a ripped flannel shirt stumbled across the stage with a sign around his neck that said "You."

"I'm lost!" You cried. "I'm wandering in a sort of wilderness!"

"Hey, You, come on over!" shouted a girl across the stage, labelled "Inner Peace." "I bet you've been looking for me your whole life!"

"Boy, have I!" said You. "I'll be right over!"

But then out from the wings sprinted a number of other actors, labelled "Whiny" and "Self-Absorbed" and "Blames Her Fat on Others," and so on, who draped themselves across You and began poking him in the ribs and giving him noogies.

"Oh, I can't believe you love Inner Peace more than you love me, You!" said Insecure. "That really hurts."

"Frankly, I've never been so disappointed in my life," said Disappointed.

"Oh, God, all this arguing is giving me a panic attack," said Too High-Strung to Function.

"I'm waiting, You," said Inner Peace. "Do you want me or not?"

"I do, but I seem to be trapped!" You shouted. "I can't seem to get what I want!"

"You and about a billion other people in this world," said Inner Peace sadly.

"Is there no hope for me?" asked You. "If only someone had made a lifelong study of the roadblocks people encounter on their way to Inner Peace!"

"And yet someone has," said Inner Peace.

Another fanfare sounded from the tape deck, and a masked Gold Hat, whose hat appeared to be made of actual gold, bounded onto the stage, flexed his muscles, and dragged Insecure to a paper jail, on which was written "Pokey for Those Who Would Keep Us from Inner Peace." Then the Gold Hat dragged Chronically Depressed and Clingy and Helpless and the rest across the stage and shoved them into the Pokey.

"See what I just did?" said the Gold Hat. "I just liberated You from those who would keep him from Inner Peace. So good for You! Question is, is You going to be able to stay liberated? Maybe what You needs is a repeated internal reminder. A mantra. A mantra can be thought of as a repeated internal reminder, can't it? Does anyone out there have a good snappy mantra they could perhaps share with You?"

The crowd was delighted, because they knew the mantra. Even the lowly White Hats knew the mantra—even Neil Yaniky, who sat spellbound and insecure in the first row, sucking his mustache, knew the mantra, because it was on all the TV commercials and also on the front cover of the Orientation Text in big bold letters.

"Give it to me, folks!" shouted the Gold Hat. "What time is it?"

"Now Is the Time for Me to Win!" the crowd shouted.

"You got that right, baby!" said the Gold Hat exultantly, ripping off his mask to reveal what many already suspected: this was not some mere Gold Hat but Tom Rodgers himself, founder of the Seminars.

"What fun!" he shouted. "To have something to give, and people who so badly need what I have to offer. Here's what I have to offer, folks, although it's not much, really, just two simple concepts, and the first one is: oatmeal."

From out of his suit he pulled a bowl and a box of oatmeal, and filled the bowl with the oatmeal and held the bowl up.

"Simple, nourishing, inexpensive," he said. "This represents your soul in its pure state. Your soul on the day you were born. You were perfect. You were happy. You were good.

"Now, enter Concept No. 2: crap. Don't worry, folks, I don't use actual crap up here. Only imaginary crap. You'll have to supply the crap, using your mind. Now, if someone came up and crapped in your nice warm oatmeal, what would you say? Would you say, 'Wow, super, thanks, please continue crapping in my oatmeal'? Am I being silly? I'm being a little silly. But, guess what, in real life people come up and crap in your oatmeal all the time—friends, co-workers, loved ones, even your kids, especially your kids!—and that's exactly what you do. You say, 'Thanks so much!' You say, 'Crap away!' You say, and here my metaphor breaks down a bit, 'Is there some way I can help you crap in my oatmeal?'

"Let me tell you something amazing: I was once exactly like you people. A certain someone, a certain guy who shall remain nameless, was doing quite a bit of crapping in my oatmeal, and simply because he'd had some bad luck, simply because he was in some pain, simply because, actually, he was in a wheelchair, this certain someone expected me to put my life on hold while he crapped in my oatmeal by demanding round-the-clock attention, this brother of mine, this Gene, and, whoops, there goes that cat out of the bag, but does this maybe sound paradoxical? Wasn't he the one with the crap in his oatmeal, being in a wheelchair? Well, yes and no. Sure, he was hurting. No surprise there. Guy drops a motorcycle on a gravel road and bounces two hundred yards without a helmet, yes, he's going to be somewhat hurting. But how was that my fault? Was I the guy riding the motorcycle too fast, drunk, with no helmet? No, I was home, studying my Tacitus, which is what I was into at that stage of my life, so why did Gene expect me to consign my dreams and plans to the dustbin? I had dreams! I had plans! Finally, and this is all in my book, 'People of Power,' I found the inner strength to say to Gene, 'Stop crapping in my oatmeal, Gene, I'm simply not going to participate.' And I found the strength to say to our sister Ellen, 'Ellen, take the ball that is Gene and run with it, because if I sell myself short by catering to Gene I'm going to be one very angry puppy, and anger does the mean-and-nasty on a person, and I for one love myself and want the best for me, because, I am, after all, a child of God.' And I said to myself, as I describe in the book, 'Tom, now is the time for you to win!' That was the first time I thought that up. And do you know what? I won! I'm winning. Today we're friends, Gene and I, and he acknowledges that I was right all along. And as for Ellen, Ellen still has some issues. She'd take a big old dump in my oatmeal right now if I gave her half a chance, but, guess what, folks, I'm not giving her that half a chance, because I've installed a protective screen over my oatmeal—not a literal screen, but a metaphorical protective screen. Ellen knows it, Gene knows it, and now they pretty much stay out of my hair and away from my oatmeal, and they've made a nice life together, and who do you think paid for Gene's wheelchair ramp with the money he made from a certain series of seminars?"

The crowd burst into applause. Tom Rodgers held up his hand.

"Now, what about you folks?" he said softly. "Is now the time for you to win? Are you ready to screen off your metaphorical oatmeal and identify your own personal Gene? Who is it that's screwing you up? Who's keeping you from getting what you want? Somebody is! God doesn't make junk. If you're losing, somebody's doing it to you. Today I'll be guiding you through my Three Essential Steps: Identification, Screening, Confrontation. First, we'll Identify your personal Gene. Second, we'll help you mentally install a metaphorical Screen over your symbolic oatmeal. Finally, we'll show you how to Confront your personal Gene and make it clear to him or her that your oatmeal is heretofore off limits."

Tom Rodgers looked intensely out into the crowd.

"So what do you think, guys?" he asked, very softly. "Are you up for it?"

From the crowd came a nervous murmur of assent.

"All right, then," he said. "Let's line up. Let's line up for a change. A *dramatic* change."

Then he crisply left the stage, and a spotlight panned across nine Personal Change Centers, small white tents set up in a row near the fire door.

Neil Yaniky rose with the rest and checked his Line Assignment and joined his Assigned Line. He was a tiny man, nearly thirty, balding on top and balding on the sides, and was still chewing on his mustache and wondering if anyone or everyone else at the seminar could tell that he was a big stupid faker, because he had no career, really, and no business but only soldered little triangular things in his basement, for forty-seven cents a little triangular thing, for CompuParts, although he had high hopes for something better, which was why he was here.

The flap of Personal Change Center 4 flew open and in he went, bending low.

Inside were Tom Rodgers and several assistants, and a dummy in a smock sitting in a chair.

"Welcome, Neil," said Tom Rodgers, glancing at Yaniky's name tag. "I'm honored to have you in my Seminar, Neil. Now. The way we'll start, Neil, is for you to please write across the chest of this dummy the name of your real-life, personal Gene. That is, the name of the person you perceive to be crapping in your oatmeal. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Yes," said Yaniky.

Tom Rodgers was talking very fast, as if he had hundreds of people to change in a single day, which of course he did. Yaniky had no problem with that. He was just happy to be one of them.

"Do you need help determining who that person is?" said Tom Rodgers. "Your oatmeal-crapper?"

"No," said Yaniky.

"Excellent," said Tom Rodgers. "Now write the name and under it write the major way in which you perceive this person to be crapping in your oatmeal. Be frank. This is just between you and me."

On an erasable marker board permanently mounted in the dummy's chest Yaniky wrote, "Winky: Crazy-looking and too religious and needs her own place."

"Super!" said Tom Rodgers. "A great start. Now watch what I do. Let's fine-tune. Can we cut 'crazy-looking'? If this person, this Winky, were to get her own place, would the fact that she looks crazy still be an issue? As much of an issue? Less of an issue?"

Yaniky pictured his sister looking crazy but in her own apartment.

"Less of an issue," he said.

"All right!" said Tom Rodgers, erasing "crazy-looking." "It's important to simplify so that we can hone in on exactly what we're trying to change. O.K. At this point, we've determined that if we can get her out of your house the crazy-looking can be lived with. A big step forward. But why stop there? Let me propose something: if she's out of your hair, what the heck do you care if she's religious?"

Yaniky pictured Winky looking crazy and talking crazy about God but in her own apartment.

"It would definitely be better," he said.

"Yes, it would," said Tom Rodgers, and erased until the dummy was labelled "Winky: needs her own place."

"See?" said Tom Rodgers. "See how we've simplified? We've got it down to one issue. Can you live with this simple, direct statement of the problem?"

"Yes," Yaniky said. "Yes, I can."

Yaniky saw now what it was about Winky that got on his nerves. It wasn't her formerly red curls, which had now gone white, so it looked like she had soaked the top of her head in glue and dipped it in a vat of cotton balls; it wasn't the bald spot that every morning she painted with some kind of white substance; it wasn't her shiny-pink face that was always getting weird joyful looks on it at bad times, like during his dinner date with Beverly Amstel, when he'd made his special meatballs but to no avail, because Bev kept glancing over at Winky in panic; it wasn't the way she came click-click-clicking in from teaching church school and hugged him for too long a time while smelling like flower water, all pumped up from spreading the word of damn Christ; it was simply that they were too old to be living together and he had things he wanted to accomplish and she was too needy and blurred his focus.

"Have you told this person, this Winky, that her living with you is a stumbling block for your personal development?" said Tom Rodgers.

"No, I haven't," Yaniky said.

"I thought not," said Tom Rodgers. "You're kindhearted. You don't want to hurt her. That's nice, but guess what? You are hurting her. You're hurting her by not telling her the truth. Am I saying that you, by your silence, are crapping in her oatmeal? Yes, I am. I'm saying that there's a sort of reciprocal crapping going on here. How can Winky grow on a diet of lies? Isn't it true that the truth will set you free? Didn't someone once say that? Wasn't it God or Christ, which would be ironic, because of her being so religious?"

Tom Rodgers gestured to an assistant, who took a wig out of a box and put it on the dummy's head.

"What we're going to do now is act this out symbolically," Tom Rodgers said. "Primitive cultures do this all the time. They might throw Fertility a big party, say, or paint their kids white and let them whack Sickness with palm fronds and so forth. Are we somehow smarter than primitive cultures? I doubt it. I think maybe we're dumber. Do we have fewer hemorrhoids? Were Incas killed on freeways? Here, take this."

He handed Yaniky a baseball bat.

"What time is it, Neil?" said Tom Rodgers.

"Time to win?" said Yaniky. "Time for me to win?"

"Now is the time for you to win," said Tom Rodgers, clarifying, and pointed to the dummy.

Yaniky swung the bat and the dummy toppled over and the wig flew off and the assistant retrieved the wig and tossed it back into the box of wigs, and Tom Rodgers gave Yaniky a big hug.

"What you have just symbolically said," Tom Rodgers said, "is 'No more, Winky. Grow wings, Winky. I love you, but you're killing me, and I am a good person, a child of God, and don't deserve to die. I deserve to live, I demand to live, and, therefore, get your own place, girl! Fly, and someday thank me!' This is to be your sub-mantra, Neil, O.K.? *Out you go!* On your way home today, I want you to be muttering, not angrily muttering but sort of joyfully muttering, to center yourself, the following words: 'Now is the time for me to win! *Out you go! Out you go!*' Will you do that for me?"

"Yes," said Yaniky, very much moved.

"And now here is Vicki," said Tom Rodgers. "One of my very top Gold Hats, who will walk you through the Confrontation step. Neil! I wish you luck, and peace, and all the success in the world."

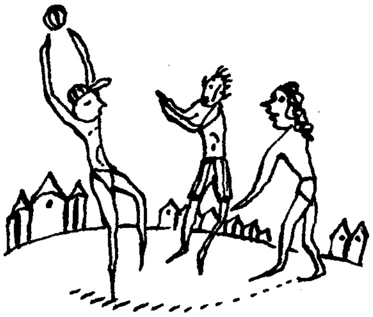
Vicki had a face that looked as if it had been smashed against a steering wheel in a crash and then carefully reworked until it somewhat resembled her previous face. Several parallel curved indentions ran from temple to chin. She led Yaniky to a folding table labelled "Confrontation Center" and gave him a sheet of paper on which was written, "Gentle, Firm, Loving."

"These are the characteristics of a good Confrontation," she said, somewhat mechanically. "Now flip it over."

On the other side was written, "Angry, Wimpy, Accusatory."

"These are the characteristics of a bad Confrontation," said Vicki. "A destructive Confrontation. O.K. So let's say I'm this person, this Winky person, and you're going to tell me to hit the road. Gentle, Firm, Loving. Now begin."

And he began telling Vicki to her damaged face that she was ruining his life and sucking him dry and that she had to go live somewhere else, and Vicki nodded and patted his hand, and now and then stopped him to tell him he was being too severe.



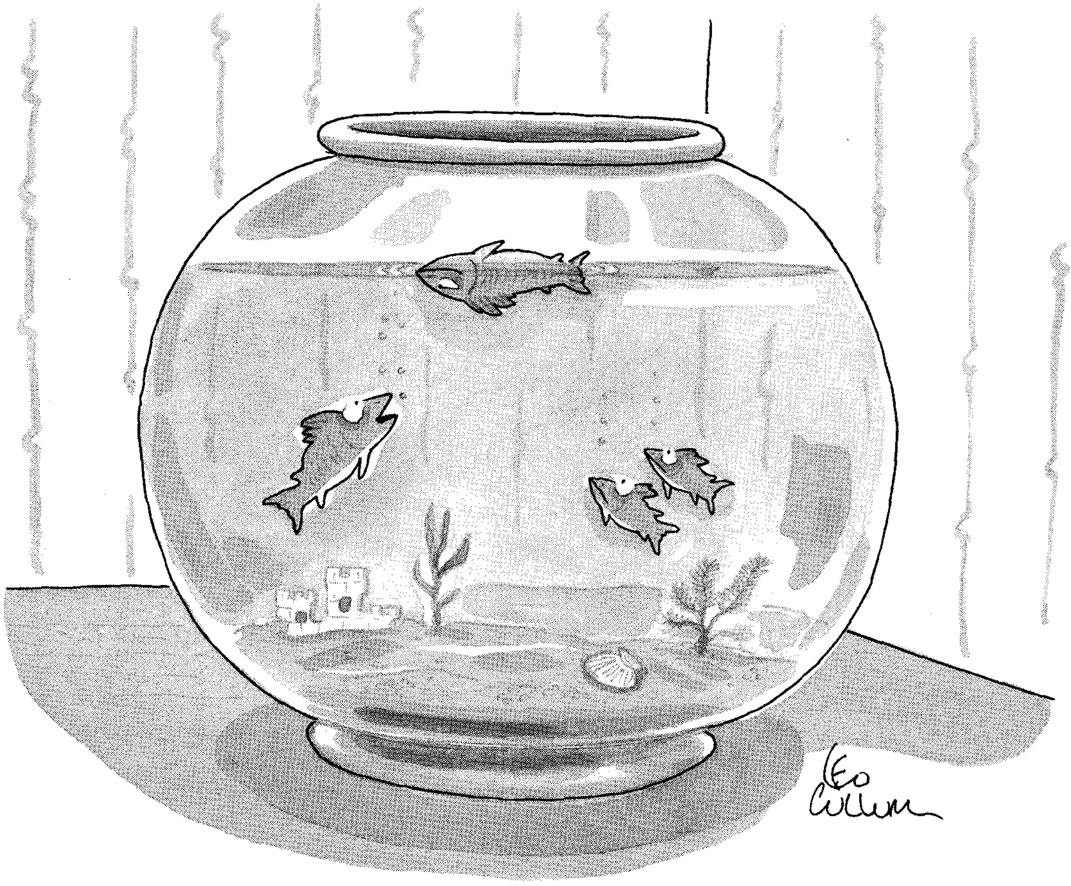
NEIL-NEIL was coming home soon and she was way way behind.

Some days she took her time while cleaning, smiling at happy thoughts, frowning when she imagined someone being taken advantage of, and sometimes the person being taken advantage of was a frail little boy with a scar on his head and the person taking advantage was a big fat man with a cane, and other times the person being taken advantage of was a kindly, friendly British girl with a speech impediment and the person taking advantage was her rich, pushy sister who spoke in perfect diction and always got everything she wanted and went around whining while sucking little pink candies. Sometimes Winky asked the rich sister in her mind how she'd like to have the little pink candies slapped right out of her mouth. But that wasn't right. That wasn't Christ's way! You didn't slap the little pink candies out of her mouth, you let her slap your mouth, seventy times seven times, which was like four hundred times, and after she'd slapped you the last time she suddenly understood it all and begged your forgiveness and gave you some candy, because that was the healing power of love.

For crying out loud! What was she doing? Was she crazy? It was time to get going! Why was she standing in the kitchen thinking?

She dashed up the stairs with a strip of broken molding under her arm and a dirty sock over her shoulder.

Halfway up she paused at a little octagonal window and looked dreamily out, thinking, In a way, we own those trees. Beyond the Thieus' was the same old gap in the leaning elms showing the same old meadow that would soon be ToyTowne. But for now it still re-



"Please, Al. You know the backstroke scares the children."

• •

minded her of the kind of field where Christ with his lap full of flowers had suffered with the little children, which was a scene she wanted to put on the cover of the singing album she was going to make, the singing album about God, which would have a watercolor cover like "Shoulder My Burden," which was a book but anyways it had this patient donkey piled high with crates and behind it this mountain, and the point of that book was that if you take on the worries and cares of others God or Jesus will take on your cares and worries, so that was why the patient donkey and why the crates, and why she prided herself on keeping house for Neil-Neil and never asked him for help.

Holy cow, what was she doing standing on the landing! Was she crazy? Today she was rushing! She was giving Neil-Neil a tea! She burst off the landing, taking two stairs at once. The molding had to go to the attic and the dirty sock to the hamper. While she was up, she could change her top. Because on it was some crusty soup. The wallpaper at the top of the stairs had metal flocking and showed about a million of the same girl whacking a smiling goose with a riding crop. Hello, girls! Hello, girls! Ha ha! Hello, geese! Not to leave you out!

From a drawer in her room she took the green top, which Neil-Neil liked. Once when she was wearing it he had asked if it was new. When had that been? At the lunch at the Beef Barn, when he paid, when he asked would she like to leave Rustic Village Apartments and come live with him. Oh, that sweetie. She still had the matchbook. Those had been sad days at Rustic Village, with every friend engaged but Doris, who had a fake arm, and, boy, those girls could sometimes say mean things, but now it was all behind her, and she needed to send poor Doris a card.

But not today! Today she was rushing!

Down the stairs she pounded, still holding the molding, sock still over her shoulder.

In the kitchen she ripped open the cookie bag but there were no clean plates, so she rinsed a plate but there was no towel, so she dried the plate with her top. Hey, she still had on the yellow top. What the heck! Where was the green top? Hadn't she just gotten it out of her drawer? Ha ha! That was funny. She should send that in to *ChristLife*. They liked cute funny things that happened, even if they had nothing to do with Jesus.

The kitchen was a disaster! But first things first. Her top sucked. Not sucked, sucked was a bad word, her top was yugly. Dad used to say that, yugly. Not about her. He always said she was purty. Sometimes he said things were purty yugly. But not her. He always said she was purty purty, and then lifted her up. Oh Dad, Daddy, Poppy-Popp! Was Poppy-Popp one with the Saviour? She hoped so. Sometimes he used to swear and sometimes he used to drink, and once he swore when he fell down the stairs when he was drunk, but when she ran to him he hopped up laughing, and, oh, when he sang "Peace in the Valley" you could tell he felt things would be better beyond, which had been a super example for a young Christian kid to witness.

She flew back up the stairs to change her top. Here was the green top, on the top step! Bad top! I should spank! She gave the green top a snap to undust it and discipline it and, putting the strip of molding and the dirty sock on the bed, changed tops right then and there, picked up the molding, threw the dirty sock over her shoulder, and pounded back down the stairs.

There were so many many things to do! Not only now, for the tea, but in the future! It was time to get going! Now that she was out of that lonely apartment she could finally learn to play the piano, and, once she learned to play and write songs, she could write her songs about God, and then find out about making a record, her record about

God, about how God had been good to her in this life, because look at her! A plain girl in a nice home! Oh, she knew she was plain, her legs were thick and her waist was thick and her hair, oh, my God—oh, my gosh, rather—her hair, what kind of hair was that to have, yugly white hair, and many was the time she had thought, This is not hair, this is a test. The test of white sparse hair, when so many had gorgeous manes, and that was why, when she looked in a mirror by accident and saw her white horrible hair, she always tried to think to herself, Praise God!

Neil-Neil was the all-time sweetie pie. Those girls were crazy! Did they think because a man was small and bald he had no love? Did they think bad things came in small packages? Neil-Neil was like the good brother in the Bible, the one who stayed home with his dad on the farm and never even got a small party. Except there was no bad brother, it was just the two of them, so still no party, although she'd get her party, a big party, in Heaven, and was sort of even having her party now, on earth, and when she saw that little man all pee-stained at Rexall Drug, not begging but just saying to every person who went in that he or she was looking dapper, she knew that he was truly the least of her brothers. The world was a story Christ was telling her. And when she told the pee-man at the Rexall that he was looking dapper himself and he said loudly that she was too ugly to f—, she had only thought to herself, O.K., praise God, he's only saying that because he's in pain, and she had smiled with the lightest light in her eyes that she could get by wishing it there, because even if she was a little yugly she was still beautiful in Christ's sight, and for her it was all a party, a little party before a bigger party, the biggest, but what about Neil-Neil, where was his party?

She would do what she could! This would be his party, one tiny installment on the huge huge party he deserved, her brother, her pal to the end, the only loving soul she had yet found in this world.

The bell rang and she threw open the door, and there was Neil-Neil.

REFRIGERATOR, 1957

More like a vault: you pull the handle out
and on the shelves not a lot,
and what there is (a boiled potato
in a bag, a chicken carcass
under foil) looking dispirited,
drained, mugged. This is not
a place to go in hope or hunger.
But, just to the right of the middle
of the middle door shelf, on fire, a lit-from-within red,
heart-red, sexual-red, wet neon-red,
shining red in their liquid, exotic,
aloof, slumming
in such company: a jar
of maraschino cherries. Three-quarters
full, fiery globes, like strippers
at a church social. Maraschino cherries, "maraschino"
the only foreign word I knew. Not once
did I see these cherries employed: not
in a drink, nor on top
of a glob of ice cream,

"Welcome home!" she said grandly, and bowed at the waist, and the sock fell off her shoulder.

YANIKY had walked home in a frenzy, gazing into shopwindows, knowing that someday soon, when he came into these shops with his sexy wife, he'd simply point out items with his riding crop and they would be loaded into his waiting Benz, although come to think of it why a riding crop? Who used a riding crop? Did you use a riding crop on the Benz? Ho, man, he was stoked! He wanted a Jag, not a Benz! Golden statues of geese, classy vases, big porcelain frogs, whatever, when his ship came in he'd have it all, because when he was stoked nothing could stop him.

If Dad could see him now! Walking home in a suit from a seminar at the freaking Hyatt! Poor Dad, not that he was bashing Dad, but had Dad been a seeker? Well, no, Dad had been no seeker, life had beaten Dad. Dad had spent every evening with a beer on the divan, under a comforter, and he remembered poor Ma in her Sunday dress, which had a rip, which she'd taped because she couldn't sew, and Dad in his too big hat, recently fired again, and all of them on the way to church, dragging past a crowd of spick hoods on the corner, and one spick said something about Ma's boobs, which were big, but all of Ma was big, so why did the hood have to say something about her big boobs, as if they were nice? When they all knew they weren't nice, they were just a big woman's boobs in a too tight dress on a rainy Sunday morning, and on her head was a slit-open bread bag to keep her gray hair dry. The hood said what he said because one look at Dad told him he could. Dad, with his hunched shoulders and his constant blinking, just smirked and took Ma's arm and told the hood that a comment like that did more damage to the insulter than to the insulted, etc. etc. blah blah blah. Then the hood made a sound like a cow, at Ma, and Neil, who was nine, tried to break away and take a swing at the hood but Ma had his hand and wouldn't turn him loose and secretly he was glad, because he was scared, and then was ashamed at the relief he felt on entering the dark church, where the thin panicked preacher, who was losing his congregation, exchanged sly Biblical quotes with Dad as Winky stood beaming as if none of it outside had happened, the lower half of her body gone psychedelic in the stained-glass light.

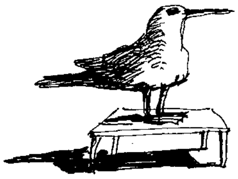
Oh, man, the world had shit on Dad, but it wasn't going to shit on him. No

or just pop one in your mouth. Not once.
The same jar there through an entire
childhood of dull dinners—bald meat,
pocked peas, and, see above,
boiled potatoes. Maybe
they came over from the old country,
family heirlooms, or were status symbols
bought with a piece of the first paycheck
from a sweatshop,
which beat the pig farm in Bohemia,
handed down from my grandparents
to my parents
to be someday mine,
then my child's?
They were beautiful
and if I never ate one
it was because I knew it might be missed
or because I knew it would not be replaced
and because you do not eat
that which rips your heart with joy.

—Thomas Lux

way. If the world thought he was going to live in a neighborhood where spicks insulted his wife's boobs, if the world thought he was going to make his family eat bread dragged through bacon grease while calling it hobo's delight, the world was just wrong, he was going to succeed, like the men described in "People of Power," who had gardens bigger than entire towns and owned whole ships and believed in power and power only. Were thirty horse-drawn carts needed to save the roses? The call went out to the surrounding towns and at dusk lanterns from the carts could be seen approaching on the rocky bumpy roads. Was a serving girl found attractive? Her husband was sent away to war. Those guys knew how to find and occupy their Power Places, and he did, too, like when he sometimes had to solder a thousand triangular things in a night to make the rent, and drink coffee till dawn and crank WMDX full blast to stay psyched. On those nights, when Winky came up making small talk, he boldly waved her away, and when he waved her away, away she went, because she sensed in his body language that he was king, that what he was doing was essential, and when she went away he felt good, he felt strong, and he soldered faster, which was the phenomenon the book called the Power Boost, and the book said that Major Successes tended to be people who could string together Power Boost after Power Boost, which was accomplished by doing exactly what you felt like at any given time, with certainty and joy, which was what, he realized, he was about to do, by kicking out Winky!

Now was the time for him to win! Why the heck couldn't he cook his special meatballs for Beverly and afterward make love to her on the couch and tell her his dreams and plans and see if she was the one meant to be his life's helpmate, like Mrs. Thomas Alva Edison, who had once stayed up all night applying labels to a shipment of chemicals essential for the next day's work? But no. Bev was dating someone else now, some kind of guard at the mall, and he remembered the meatball dinner, Winky's pink face periodically thrusting into the steam from the broccoli as she trotted out her usual B.S. on stigmata and the amount of time necessary for an actual physical body to rot. No wonder her roommates had kicked her out, calling him in secret, no wonder her preacher had demanded she stop volunteering so much—another secret call, people had apparently been quitting the church because of her. She was a nut, a real energy sink, it had been a huge mistake inviting her to live with him and now she simply had to go.



It was sad, yes, a little sad, but if greatness were easy everyone would be doing it.

Yes, she'd been a cute kid and, yes, they'd shared some nice moments, yes yes yes, yes, she'd brought him crackers and his little radio that time he'd hid under the steps for nine straight hours after Dad started weeping during dinner, and, yes, he remembered the scared look in her eyes when she'd come running up to him after taking a fishhook in the temple while fishing with the big boys, and, yes, he'd carried her home as the big boys cackled, yes, it was sad that she sang so bad and thought it was good and sad that her panties were huge now when he found them in the wash but like it said in the book a person couldn't throw himself across someone else's funeral pyre without getting pretty God-damned hot.

She had his key so he rang the bell.

She appeared at the door, looking crazy as ever.

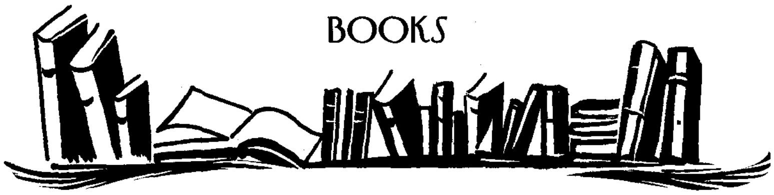
"Welcome home!" she said, and bowed at the waist, and a sock fell off her shoulder, and as she bent to pick it up she banged her head against the storm window, the poor dorky thing.

Oh shit, oh shit, he was weakening, he could feel it, the speech he'd practiced on the way home seemed now to have nothing to do with the girl who stood wet-eyed in the doorway, rubbing her bald spot. He wasn't powerful, he wasn't great, he was just the same as everybody else, less than everybody else, other people got married and had real jobs, other people didn't live with their fat clinging sisters, he was a loser who would keep losing for the rest of his life, because he'd never gotten a break, he'd been cursed with a bad Dad and a bad Ma and a bad sister, and was too weak to change, too weak to make a new start, and as he pushed by her into the tea-smelling house the years ahead stretched out bleak and joyless in his imagination and his chest went suddenly dense with rage.

"Neil-Neil," she said. "Is something wrong?"

And he wanted to smack her, insult her, say something to wake her up, but only kept moving toward his room, calling her terrible names under his breath. ♦

BOOKS



THE NATURAL

The woman who did what she wanted to do.

BY DAVID DENBY

In many of Ingrid Bergman's early publicity stills, she is posed chin up, her eyes gazing skyward, as if searching for light in the heavens. Of course, she was hardly the only actress posed with an upward tilt. In Hollywood's glamour period, star after star (Lana, Rita, Susan, Hedy, Veronica) was stretched out on silk with her torso arched and her head flung back as she looked at the camera with sultry yearning. There was no doubt what those plushly beautiful women were waiting for: the camera, positioned above, virtually replaced the studio boss on the casting couch. Bergman's presence was less obviously erotic, yet there was something shining, ardent, and anticipatory about her beauty. Spencer Tracy looks down at her as she is sitting in an alley early in the 1941 "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde": her Cockney minx, Ivy, glances up and smiles shamelessly, the smile at once shocking in its frankness and touching in its naïve assurance. It is one of the most dazzling entrances that any actress made in a forties movie. Her eyes overwhelm the camera.

Bergman was perhaps the least narcissistic great star in Hollywood's middle decades (with only Meryl Streep and Michelle Pfeiffer to rival her since then in that particular virtue). For much of her life, she was hardworking and relatively selfless—one of those women George Eliot had in mind when she spoke, in the famous "Prelude" to "Middlemarch," of the pathos of noble temperaments cast in straitened modern circumstances: "Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse." Bergman's ideal was to be a serious actress in an industry that encouraged vanity more than seriousness. She did play a nun, a missionary, and Golda Meir, and she longed to play Joan of Arc (and finally, alas, got her wish), but most of the time she played women in love, or women hoping for love; and in her personal life she was looking, like Eliot's heroine Dorothea Brooke, for a wise and strong lover who could be her guide and mentor. One thinks of her in relation to her male co-stars, nuzzling against Leslie Howard, Humphrey Bogart, Charles Boyer, Gary Cooper, and Cary Grant; one remembers the shy ardor, the yielding and defiant moods, the desire to break through to men, and the anguish when she was thwarted or mocked. Donald Spoto, in his just published biography of Bergman, "Notorious" (HarperCollins; $27.50), treats her as a powerfully healthy and creative woman, very sure of herself professionally, who was nevertheless in thrall to one man or another for much of her life.

The thralldom is no surprise. Bergman had the actor's classic unhappy childhood. Her German-born mother died when she was two, and her father, a sometime choral director and owner of a Stockholm photography shop, when she was thirteen. She was a tall, dreamy, parentless girl, unhappy in school, her gloom lifting only when she could act or recite something. She enrolled for classes at the Royal Dramatic Theatre School, in Stockholm, and, when she was eighteen, began an affair with the married Swedish leading man Edvin Adolphson, who later put her in a film that he was directing. Bergman dropped out of school and quickly became an acting star of the Swedish cinema, playing, typically, a young woman (barmaid, secretary, piano teacher) who falls in love with an older man. While she was still involved with Adolphson, she began seeing, and eventually married, Petter Lindstrom, a dashing but serious-minded young Swede, who later became a neurosurgeon in the United States. Lindstrom had no interest in acting or in the pleasures of show business, and felt a seemingly unconscious contempt for his wife. (He once said, "She is not very intelligent, but she is special.") Still, he took over active management of her career, giving her firm direction, and that, apparently, was what she wanted.

David O. Selznick signed Bergman up in 1939, initially for an American remake of one of her Swedish hits, "Intermezzo." They met for the first time in the kitchen of Miriam Hopkins's house, where Bergman had been invited for a private screening. Selznick, arriving late after an exhausting day spent working on "Gone with the Wind," spoke to her while eating leftovers and, in rapid succession, complained of her name (it had to be changed), her teeth (they needed fixing) and her eyebrows (they were too thick). Bergman, according to Spoto, refused to make the alterations and announced that she would be happy to return to Sweden. At that, Selznick, stunned by her good sense, decided that she should be advertised for her "natural" look. *Nothing* was to be done to improve her appearance. She worked before the camera, the public was told, without makeup—which was not strictly true, for she required a touch of powder, since her fair skin turned red from the lights. In one publicity photo, she was posed in Swedish-milkmaid dress, holding a dish of ice cream.

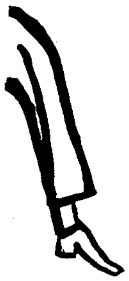
Bergman did not have Garbo's spiritualized and tormented beauty, or the masklike conformation of Joan Crawford, or Katharine Hepburn's glamorous bones. She had soft, rounded features; she was full-bodied (even, occasionally, a little thick-waisted); and she spoke in a throaty voice tinged with a slight Swedish accent, which figured, for Americans, as a sign of general cultivation. Yet her foreignness was never exotic or off-putting. She wasn't actressy, remote, or queenly but, rather, a womanly woman, whom you imagined you could talk to. She would listen and understand.

In critics and other movie journalists she awakened an extraordinary protective gallantry. Bosley Crowther, of the *Times*, young and already writing badly, interviewed her in 1940 and began his report as follows: "Picture the sweetheart of a Viking, freshly scrubbed with Ivory soap, eating peaches and cream from a Dresden china bowl on the first warm day of Spring atop a sea-scarred cliff, and you have a fair impression of Ingrid Bergman." Crowther's bedazzled prose wasn't atypical. According to Spoto, the excessive good will always worried Bergman: she was too sensible to take it seriously, and feared

Ingrid Bergman in 1952 with Robertino Rossellini, the son whose birth led to her denunciation on the Senate floor.

that it might be withdrawn all too quickly.

She was generally indifferent to money (she left negotiations to her husband), but she wanted the best roles and she demanded that her parts make sense. Before "Casablanca" went into production, she asked so many pointed questions about the young woman she was to play—Ilsa Lund—that she forced the filmmakers to pull the shambling script together. She is, of course, the earnest emotional center of that mischievous work. She doesn't have any of the memorably insolent lines, but when Paul Henreid's Resistance leader says to her, "I love you very much," and she responds, slowly, almost crooning, "Yes, yes, I know," the viewer realizes with a slight pang of dismay that she is ready to leave him for Humphrey Bogart. She was a mistress of doubleness, and even tripleness, of emotions furiously at odds—love at war with shame, fear yielding to fascination, chagrin running into rage—and all these changes were accomplished with such liquid speed and easy articulation that you can't see where one moment of consciousness ends and another begins. She was the great lyricist of suffering.



FORTIES Hollywood may have revelled in the kitsch sentimentalism of female sacrifice, martyrdom, and redemption, but the very opulence of these emotions was a tremendous opportunity for actresses. Bergman, as Spoto rightly points out, repeatedly turned cliché into something moving. In "Gaslight" (1944), directed by George Cukor, she played a lively young wife literally stunned by her husband's malevolence. Sprawling on divans, her depressed spirit needled by a tiny impulse of revolt, she half longs to die and be done with it. Hitchcock, working with a brilliant Ben Hecht script, got something drier and more sardonic from her in "Notorious" (1946). Here she is a modern woman, a self-disgusted alcoholic and demimondaine hoping for love from a hard-shelled guy (Cary Grant). Normally a sincere performer, Bergman, nibbling on Grant's lobes, was teasing and ironic this time, more openly sexual.

But Bergman felt constrained by big-studio thinking and was bored by the meaningless hierarchies of movie-colony social life. She ended her contract with Selznick in 1946 and, after a few uncertain films, linked up with Roberto Rossellini, whose neorealist "Open City" and "Paisà" she had seen in a New York art house. In 1949, she went to work with Rossellini on "Stromboli" and then began an affair with him, leaving Lindstrom and their daughter, Pia, behind in Beverly Hills—at which point a storm of public indignation broke out with a virulence perhaps unequalled in movie history. Bergman was, at that moment, the most popular and respected female star in America, yet she was pronounced immoral by columnists, then attacked from pulpits, and her films were banned by cities and states and explicitly repudiated by millions of clubwomen. On and on it went, a hazing too thorough and violent to seem amusing even today, though Senator Edwin C. Johnson, of Colorado, certainly achieved a sublime absurdity when, after Bergman bore Rossellini a son in 1950, he denounced her on the Senate floor as "a free-love cultist" and "an apostle of degradation."

She went from saint to degenerate in less than a year. The violence was produced, of course, by the bizarre extravagance of the earlier idealization, now outraged by the plain sight of a restless woman fulfilling herself intellectually and romantically. It was, perhaps, the last period in which Americans forced their idols to be exemplary figures as a way of insuring themselves against self-examination. Robert Mitchum had already been imprisoned in 1949 for smoking pot, and Chaplin would be hounded out of the country a few years later partly for his sexual escapades. Bergman had violated sanctities that were about to disappear—an aggressive act that she performed unintentionally.

IN Rossellini, she got no bargain. He was married, and he also had numerous mistresses (five, by Spoto's count), including the alarmingly tempestuous Anna Magnani, who was known to dump pasta on his head in moments of displeasure. Rossellini was a car racer who loved excitement and an expansive intellectual generous with his enthusiasms—the perfect type of artist-scoundrel (like Orson Welles, he disdained the paying of bills) and the exact opposite of Dr. Lindstrom in every way, except that both desired to control Ingrid Bergman. Rossellini insisted that she make movies only with him—a demand that proved awkward for her. Much as she admired Rossellini's films, she was, after all, a Hollywood pro who had worked on three occasions with the meticulous Hitchcock, and she was shocked by Ros-

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sellini's use of nonprofessional actors in minor roles, and by his way of seeming to throw his movies together carelessly after weeks of dawdling. In her life with him (they married and had two more children, the twins Isabella and Ingrid), happiness and misery were inextricably combined.

Spoto relates all this copiously and with skill, but he falls now and then into the biographer's vice: a too pressing intimacy with the great star, an overeager empathy with Bergman's problems and emotional states. The clammy possessiveness of so many film bios is produced, I suspect, by the fan's ultimate fantasy—that he or she might have been the one faithful friend and adviser who would always understand and say the right thing. Spoto assures us that in the love affairs Bergman had before she met Rossellini (affairs with the war photographer Robert Capa, the musician Larry Adler, and the movie director Victor Fleming) she wanted more than mere sex. We are most grateful to hear it. Spoto has also written biographies of Hitchcock, Stanley Kramer, Tennessee Williams, Lotte Lenya, Preston Sturges, Laurence Olivier, Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and James Dean, and he may well long to be the one sweater that fit Lana Turner perfectly.

The films Bergman made with Rossellini were fascinating but not commercially successful. (Spoto, a Hollywood guy at heart, coldly dismisses them, particularly "Viaggio in Italia," the odd, clumsy, and immensely influential masterpiece that they made in 1953.) Their marriage fell apart, and Bergman eventually married again, to Lars Schmidt, a Swedish theatrical impresario. There was some serious stage work in those years and, in 1956, a rather gruesome Hollywood rehabilitation in the turgid "Anastasia." Except for her work in Ingmar Bergman's 1978 "Autumn Sonata," which she made shortly before her death, most of the late movie roles are minor. But her life was always strenuous and honorable. Having grown up with death, Spoto says, she expected relationships to be transitory. When love collapsed, she suffered and then got on with it. From our perspective, she seems a woman of generous beauty and talent who did what she wanted to do, was waylaid by public sanctimoniousness, and never complained. The pathos of her life was that she remained emotionally dependent on powerful men; its glory was that she made out of the common fate of women an art that remains a singular triumph of will. ♦

(Advt.)

We book lovers are a loyal breed. We tend to be almost religiously devoted to the writers' art and to a great book's power to move us, to inspire intense emotion and deep thought.

We also like to laugh, which is why there is an ever-expanding cult of **Christopher Moore** fans in this country. In the past, this author has explored the comic possibilities of California vampire love and Native American trickster mythology. In his latest release, ***ISLAND OF THE SEQUINED LOVE NUN***—a novel as quirky as its title—he strands a defrocked former pilot for a large cosmetics firm among cannibals, mad doctors and talking fruit bats on a Micronesian island hell ruled by a beautiful, bored sex goddess. After reading this off-center take on messiahs and cargo cults, you'll appreciate the dedication of Moore's aficionados. You might even decide to join the Order.

J.R. Dunn asks provocative questions in his novel ***DAYS OF CAIN:*** What is our obligation to the past and to the future? How far can we let our ethics and our hearts take us? The author takes a renegade from the distant future very far indeed: back to Auschwitz with a plan to prevent the Holocaust. But right and wrong have many subtle shadings and gradations. If we had the will and the power to eradicate extreme evil, would that give us the right to destroy the continuity of history? It's something to think about.

Does a woman have the right to do whatever she wishes to her own body? Perhaps. **Jenefer Shute's** novel, ***LIFE-SIZE,*** examines this question through the eyes and thoughts of a young, sixty-seven-pound woman who is starving herself in order to achieve bodily perfection and find her true essence. This story of anorexia from the inside is affecting and, at times, darkly humorous; and it says much about the unrealistic American perception of beauty and the tyranny of thinness that oppresses so many women in our society.

We'll talk again.

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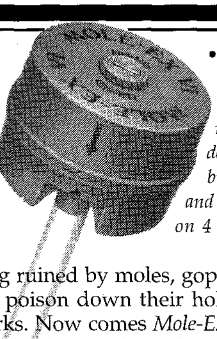

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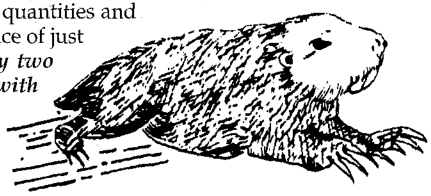

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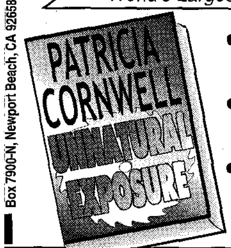

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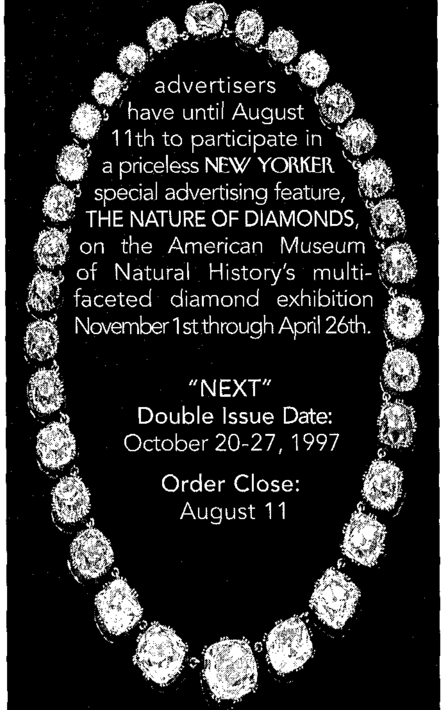

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AFFLICTIONS

THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY, by Jean-Dominique Bauby; translated from the French by Jeremy Leggatt (Knopf; $20). In 1995, Bauby suffered a massive stroke, which swept away his life as husband, father, and editor of the French *Elle*. Entirely paralyzed, he became a sort of psychic pearl diver, surfacing only to blink out his thoughts, letter by letter, to an assistant. Despite this laborious method of composition, Bauby's prose is remarkably light: the sentences soar, unburdened by self-pity or despair, and the progression of short, lyrical chapters begins to resemble the beating of wings. Sadly, Bauby died just after the publication of the French edition.

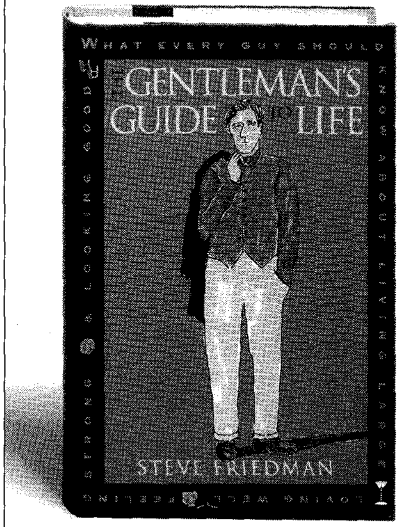
THE SEEING GLASS, by Jacquelin Gorman (Riverhead; $22.95). The author's late brother, called Robin after the color of his eggshell-blue eyes, was one of the first children on record in whom autism was diagnosed, in the early nineteen-fifties. This profoundly moving book, distinguished throughout by clarity and compassion, describes how, years later, Gorman—during a siege of optic disorders that rendered her temporarily blind—began to piece together her recollections of Robin's life. Through that dark glass she was able to see him as he was: luminous, beloved, troubled, but unbowed.

STUTTERING: A LIFE BOUND UP IN WORDS, by Marty Jezer (BasicBooks; $23). It is now thought that stuttering is caused by a neurological defect, but when the author—who is still a stutterer, in his fifties—was young psychologists blamed demanding parents or a stutterer's hostile personality. When treatments based on those approaches failed to help him, Jezer tried a variety of speech therapies that promised to train stutterers into fluency; none worked. This memoir recounts miseries that normal speakers never dream of, but it is in no way pathetic. Jezer has worked successfully as a writer and a political activist, has fathered a child who doesn't stutter, and has amassed a wonderful collection of friends.

PATIENT, by Ben Watt (Grove; $21). Ben Watt is one half of Everything but the Girl, a British pop phenomenon known for its quiet elegance and ringing, epiphanic lyricism. Watt's writing shares these qualities, and his book is a nearly flawless telling of his unexpected and drawn-out battle with an extremely rare—and nearly fatal—illness. He discovers that being a "patient" means waiting—whether for a sponge bath, for a drip line, for a visit from his partner and bandmate Tracey Thorn, or, since his recovery, for the possibility of renewed antagonisms from his own immune system.

BREATHLESS: AN ASTHMA JOURNAL, by Louise DeSalvo (Beacon; $20). The author, a Virginia Woolf scholar, has turned her attention on herself, in a report on the progress of her asthma—a malady, she points out, also suffered by Updike, Bishop, and Proust. Here, however, complaint is not turned into art, and it comes as no surprise when she explains that she returned to psychotherapy in part because only someone paid to do so would listen to her talk on and on about her illness.

answers to the questions that try men's souls



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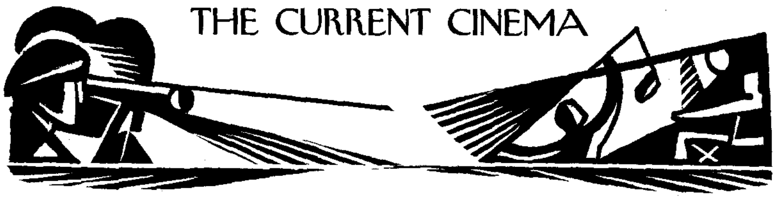


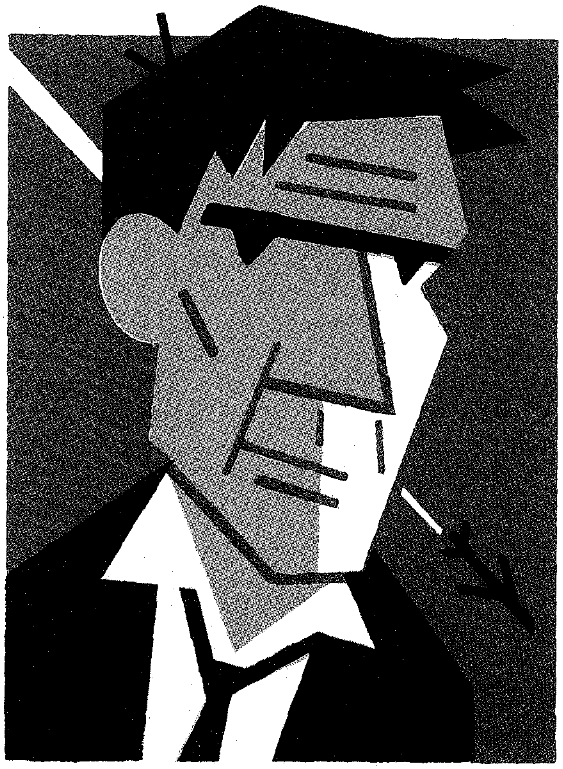
THE CURRENT CINEMA

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

An action-hero President, and a monstrous father.

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

IN Wolfgang Petersen's "Air Force One," Harrison Ford plays President James Marshall, a red-blooded, two-fisted Chief Executive who, to put it mildly, bears scant resemblance to any recent occupant of the Oval Office. Marshall is, in a way, the virile-warrior President that Ronald Reagan imagined himself to be in the dark screening room of his mind—where the Leader of the Free World, like the hero of a Saturday-morning serial, could crush an Evil Empire single-handed. In "Air Force One," the very empire that the Gipper and his teammates left for dead threatens to rise again, in the form of a Russian-nationalist movement led by a General Radek (Jurgen Prochnow). The picture begins with a commando raid on Radek's stronghold in Kazakhstan: American and Russian forces collaborate to extract the granite-faced fascist from his palatial command post and relocate him to a state prison. But, we soon learn, Radek's excitable minions have no intention of folding up their tents and surrendering. With the help of a shifty-eyed traitor on the President's security staff, a gang of the General's followers hijack Marshall's plane—en route from Moscow to Washington after a state dinner celebrating the success of the joint mission—and demand Radek's immediate release. The terrorists kill or capture everyone on board except, oddly, the President himself. The bad guys believe that he has been ejected from the plane in the parachute-equipped "escape pod" that's designed to float him to safety in the event of an emergency. But no: Marshall has launched the pod empty and stayed on the plane in the hope of rescuing his wife (Wendy Crewson) and his twelve-year-old daughter (Liesel Matthews), who are among the hostages.



Rough Rider: President Harrison Ford puts Teddy Roosevelt to shame in "Air Force One."

STEPHEN SAVAGE

The situation requires him to go into battle not as the Commander-in-Chief but, rather, as a pesky, cunning guerrilla—specifically, a business-suited version of Bruce Willis in "Die Hard." With loosened tie, he lurks and darts and, when necessary, unleashes rippling bursts of automatic-weapons fire, all in an attempt to foil the plans of the ruthless, goateed head terrorist, Korshunov (Gary Oldman). Fortunately, this President is no stranger to combat: he was, the movie tells us, awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in Vietnam. And it's a good thing, too, that the fiftyish Marshall is as fit as an Olympic gymnast: before "Air Force One" is over, he will have to wrestle more than one buff Russky assassin, engage in *two* mortal struggles at the edge of an open parachute bay, and dangle from a cable attached to a rescue plane. Even Rough Rider Teddy Roosevelt might not have been up to that level of physical activity. But Marshall is a President among Presidents: this, we know instinctively, is a man who could descend the stairs from Greg Norman's house without fear, laughing in the face of danger.

In fairness to "Air Force One," it's marginally less ludicrous than "Face/Off," and considerably shorter: this picture—perhaps out of consideration for the bladder-control concerns of its older target audience—clocks in at under two hours, which makes Petersen nearly twenty minutes smarter than John Woo. The screenwriter, Andrew W. Marlowe, thoughtfully supplies, in his ponderous dialogue, several crowd-pleasing howlers. A few of these are delivered by an anxious-looking Glenn Close, who, as the Vice-President, issues terse commands from a Washington conference room and frets aloud about constitutional authority while the President dodges bullets in the baggage hold. But most of the ripest lines have been given to Gary Oldman, whose Russian accent here is just a shade off the Transylvanian number he sported in Coppola's "Dracula": his "I would defy God Himself for Mother Russia" outdoes even the purplest of Close's dialogue, and his reading, fuelled by the extra energy that British actors always keep in reserve for villains' roles, propels the line into the stratosphere of camp. For a while, it's almost fun watching him play Ming the Merciless to Ford's Flash Gordon. At least they don't have to swap faces.

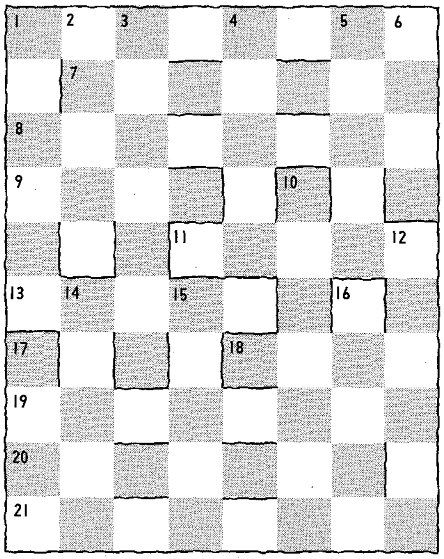
Actually, the berserkness of "Air Force One" is fairly painless. What's fascinating about the picture is that it courts the middle-aged (and up) Harrison Ford action-movie constituency—presumably a soberer, more sensible bunch than the testosterone-addled youths to whom films like "Face/Off" and "Con Air" are marketed—with a premise that is, in absolute terms, on pretty much the same level of loopiness as the movies the younger audience favors. It's like a geriatric comic book, whose hero acts out the aggressive fantasies of a graying white male audience: James Marshall is a kick-ass C.E.O., proving to the world that he still knows how to fight in the trenches—while upholding the high moral standards that, in this fairy-tale scenario, give the mature, distinguished American power-wielder a clear advantage over punk upstarts, with their "attitude" and "edge," and over foreigners of all ages. Every generation, I guess, produces its own uniquely stupid variety of heroic myth, and as long as you don't take any of them too seriously you can remain reasonably sane, and continue going to the movies. Let's hope they don't get any sillier than this, though. If "Air Force One" is a hit, who knows what we may be asked to swallow in the next couple of summers? The Pope (Ralph Fiennes), his skirts gathered in one hand, skittering across the floors of the Vatican while he lobs grenades at invading hordes of birth-control advocates? Or Margaret Thatcher (Ralph Fiennes) wiping out the I.R.A. with a hatpin and an AK-47 and muttering, through clenched teeth, "Make my bloody day"?

Pepe (Efrain Figueroa), the villain of Miguel Arteta's dysfunctional-family melodrama "Star Maps," is a creature far more odious than any of the various terrorists, assassins, and reptiles that Hollywood has recently employed to inspire fear and loathing in the multiplexes. By the end of this picture, you almost wish that Arteta had had the budget to administer to Pepe one of those spectacular special-effects punishments—impalement, decapitation, an extremely powerful explosion—which routinely supply catharsis to action-movie audiences. Intimate domestic dramas like "Star Maps" rarely attempt to excite such vengeful impulses in their viewers, but Arteta's vision of the havoc that a bad father—Pepe—can create within a family is so savage and so disturbing that rational solutions seem out of the question. Pepe, an aging macho bully, has driven his wife insane—she spends her days in the bedroom of their modest L.A. house, staring vacantly at television and holding conversations with the ghost of the beloved Mexican comedian Cantinflas—and he is doing his best to ruin his children, too. His elder son is a fat, lewd moron who enjoys dressing up as a masked wrestler; his daughter feels nervous and trapped; and his younger son, Carlos (Douglas Spain), is the most unfortunate of all, since Pepe has recruited him for the family business—prostitution.

The father, that is, pimps for his own son, and justifies his actions with a truly perverse variant of the "Life is hard, nobody gives you anything for nothing" spiel that bitter parents often inflict on their children: he's a monstrous exponent of "tough love." Carlos, who's a sweet, good-natured kid, clings to the belief that his stint in the skin trade is just a transitional job, something to tide him over until his acting career takes off; he underestimates the force of Pepe's determination to keep him exactly where he is. Arteta (whose first feature this is) has talent: he creates a dense texture of oppression and apprehension, and manages to pull off the difficult trick of sustaining the viewer's sympathy for a hopelessly wrongheaded young hero. What throws "Star Maps" off course is the absoluteness of Pepe's capacity for evil. As the picture goes along, his behavior just gets worse and worse; there's no limit to the depths of his malevolence. This character was probably intended as a grotesque parody of a certain kind of overbearing patriarch, but the metaphor (if that's what it's meant to be) of a father selling his son's body is too outré to have much resonance. The story plays as an unusually sad and ugly case study—one of those squalid family tragedies you hear about from Sally Jessy Raphael or Jenny Jones. And in the end yo can respond only as the members o the daytime-talk-show audiences ar encouraged to do: you howl for bloo like a spectator at a public execution.

8 x 10 CRYPTIC

NO. 8 BY TRIP PAYNE



ACROSS

1 Few beets ruined hearty meal (4,4)
7 Eight islands created by terrorist group (7)
8 Battle instigator once again put the heat on (4,4)
9 Money from Italy left retirement plan (4)
11 Stains backgammon pieces (5)
13 Boyfriend describes unknown poet (5)
18 Ask accommodating Republican for a big piece of ice (4)
19 Jackie is born on ground (8)
20 White noise spoiled piano pieces? (7)
21 Senator accepts suit color (3,5)

DOWN

1 Archer went ahead and participated in a sport (6)
2 Computer message held back by parliament (1-4)
3 Mistaken about a piece of jewelry (7)
4 Discussed unique Asian city (5)
5 Build interior of the rectory (5)
6 In recession, attract orphan (4)
10 Anticipate cost, including smeltery materials (7)
12 Employ song in dances (4,2)
14 Muddy abode! (5)
15 Skinny opening in grocery item (5)
16 Expert's excellent speech (5)
17 Greek god is concerned with shaved head (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 7 appears on page 33. or a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send our fax number or a stamped, self-addressed nvelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 0 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036.

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CAR TALK WITH DEEPAK

BY BRUCE McCALL

WHY did people in olden times believe that two unicorn antlers were bad luck? For the same reason that today we know the difference between buying and leasing to be a dream. A dream. I go back to the molecular spirituality of all matter and its interconnectedness to zero per cent financing. Passing through a gate first requires faith in the idea of the hinge. Just so, your muffler is a living thing. A living thing. Now we shall take your calls. Greetings to you, first caller.

Yeah. Hello. I got a Ford Taurus.

And you wish to discuss uneven wear on the front tires.

How the heck—

So often we speak of the toe-in and the toe-out, and camber and caster and front-end alignment—the twilight dreams of a quick-fix panacea. Yet inside us is the third spirit of rubber. The third spirit of rubber. Our souls sing the gutta-percha song, while the third spirit of rubber is smothered. Not deliberately or cruelly, but from ignorance. Do you have elastic bands in your drawer, caller?

Who doesn't? Sure. Here in the drawer.

And they are twisted, looped about this way and that.

Jumbled up like crazy. You got it.

Here, from my pocket. These rubber bands are relaxed, unkinked. They are in harmony. Your tires are not in harmony but in agony. They are wearing themselves down to try to erase themselves, to escape this agony.

So I should release the third spirit of rubber, and then it's "So long, premature tire wear"? Worth a try. Thanks!

Hello to the next caller.

My '87 Olds is burning way too much oil for a car with only eighty-five thousand miles.

A Cutlass Supreme?

A Cutlass Supreme, correct.

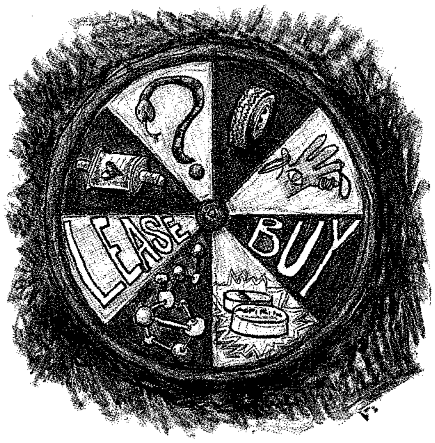
Surely you know of the conflated paradigm, the one of the bodhisattva and the viscosity of 10W-40? The myth of the snake and the two aspirins at bedtime, and so forth?

Uh . . .

You only do not yet know that you know it. When enlightenment comes, please call back. Hello, next caller?

Hi there. When the main bearings are shot, and the car's not worth more than a grand, do I just forget repairs? The estimate I got is a joke!

It was a child who first observed that man is the only creature to wear double-breasted suits. Some people say, "You are ridiculous, this is a ridiculous thing that you say." Is it? No joke is without its darker meaning. Is it ridiculous to say that the contingencies on which our doctors' appointments, our bowling-center reservations—and the wear-out of your main bearings—are predicated weigh no more than a shadow? They weigh no more than a shadow.



I think, um, I get your—

I was recently invited to address the Norwegian Storting. In Norway, you know, one needs an adapter for the electric razor. I happened to have forgotten my adapter.

And in a day or two you looked like Bruce Willis, all stubbly-faced and—

Emphatically not! I had brought a straight razor, too. From this lesson we learn that your "main bearing" is only metaphor. Only metaphor. Look into a good used Camry. Final caller, please?

I'm with the traffic department, and—

We have all seen the *National Geographic* specials: Does a herd of zebra need a traffic light? How is it that the animals of the wild do without a traffic department?

Hey, I'm sure you've got a terrific point to make, but I'm calling from right outside the radio station—

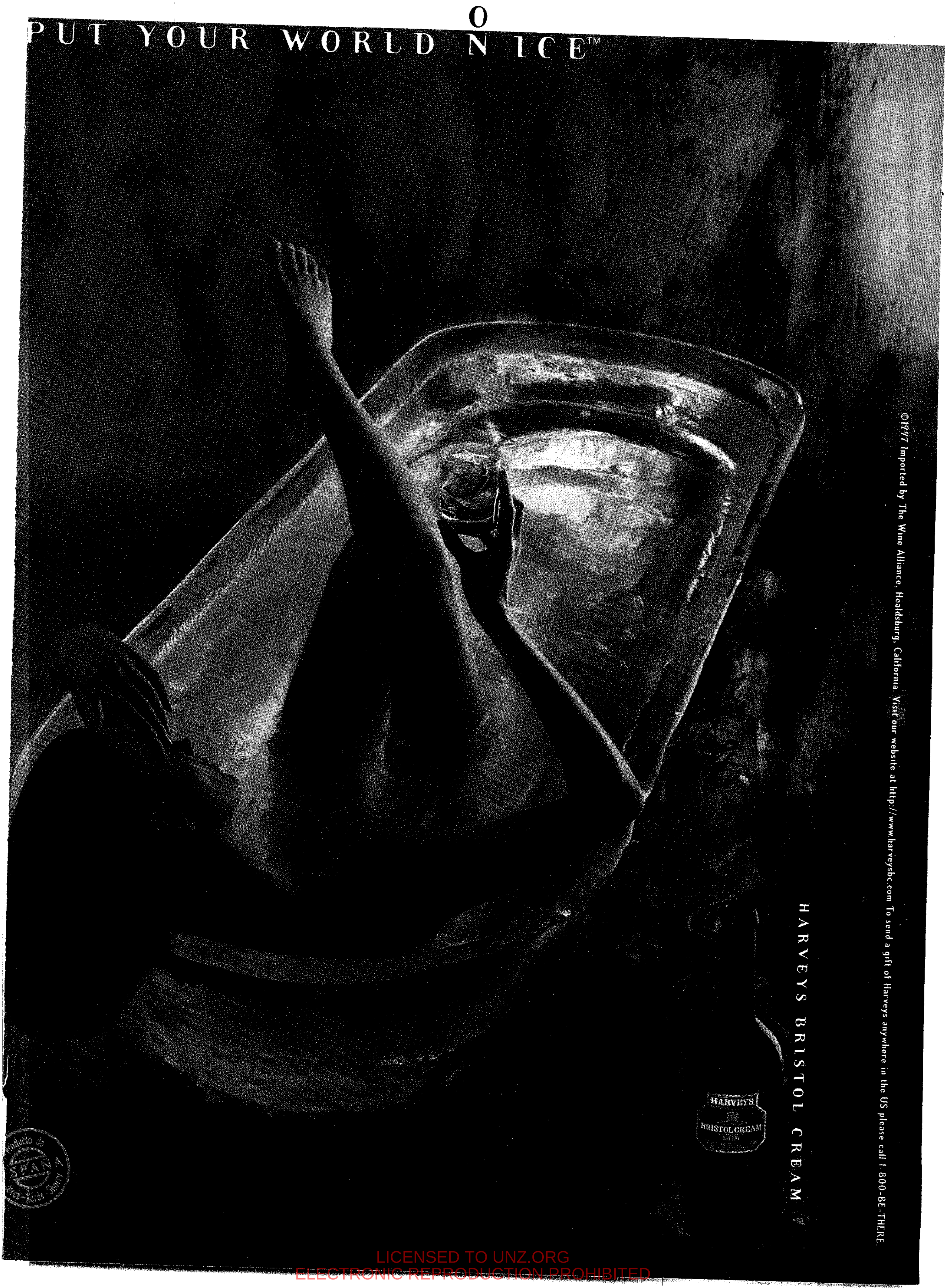
One can sense your anguish. Call my office for a private appointment. Or leave your name, and I shall—

Wait, I was just gonna say—

Why do we all avoid saying what we most need to say? How often we encounter this stifling sense over the mere uttering of words! We must unblock ourselves and pass through the membrane spun from our negativity. Can you feel the membrane, caller?

Beats me. All I know is your car's parked in front of a hydrant and we're towing it.

Such tests of our serenity, we must welcome them, and not cavil or corrode our innerness with self-pity. Besides, is only a rental, and by tonight I will b a thousand miles away in Cleveland. Now who among the radio audience will driv me to the airport? The lines are open.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